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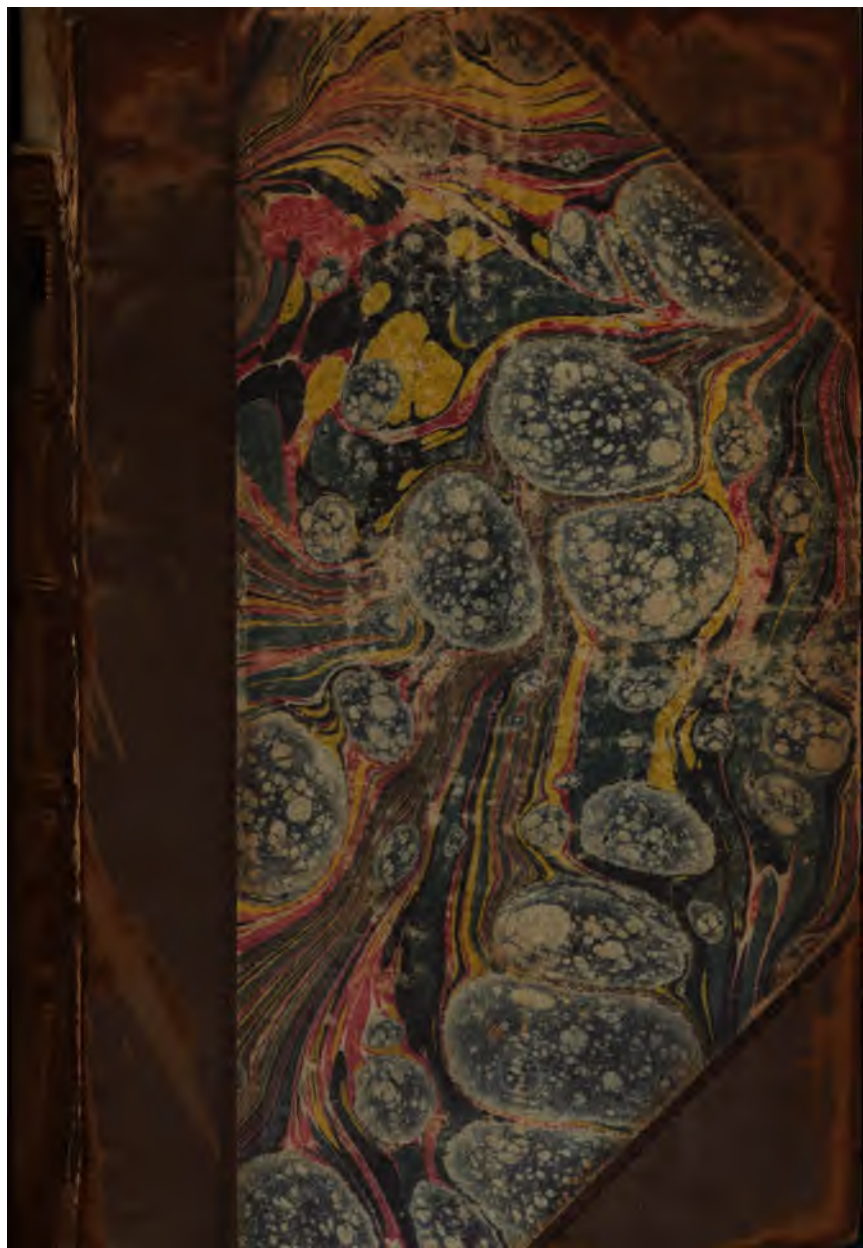
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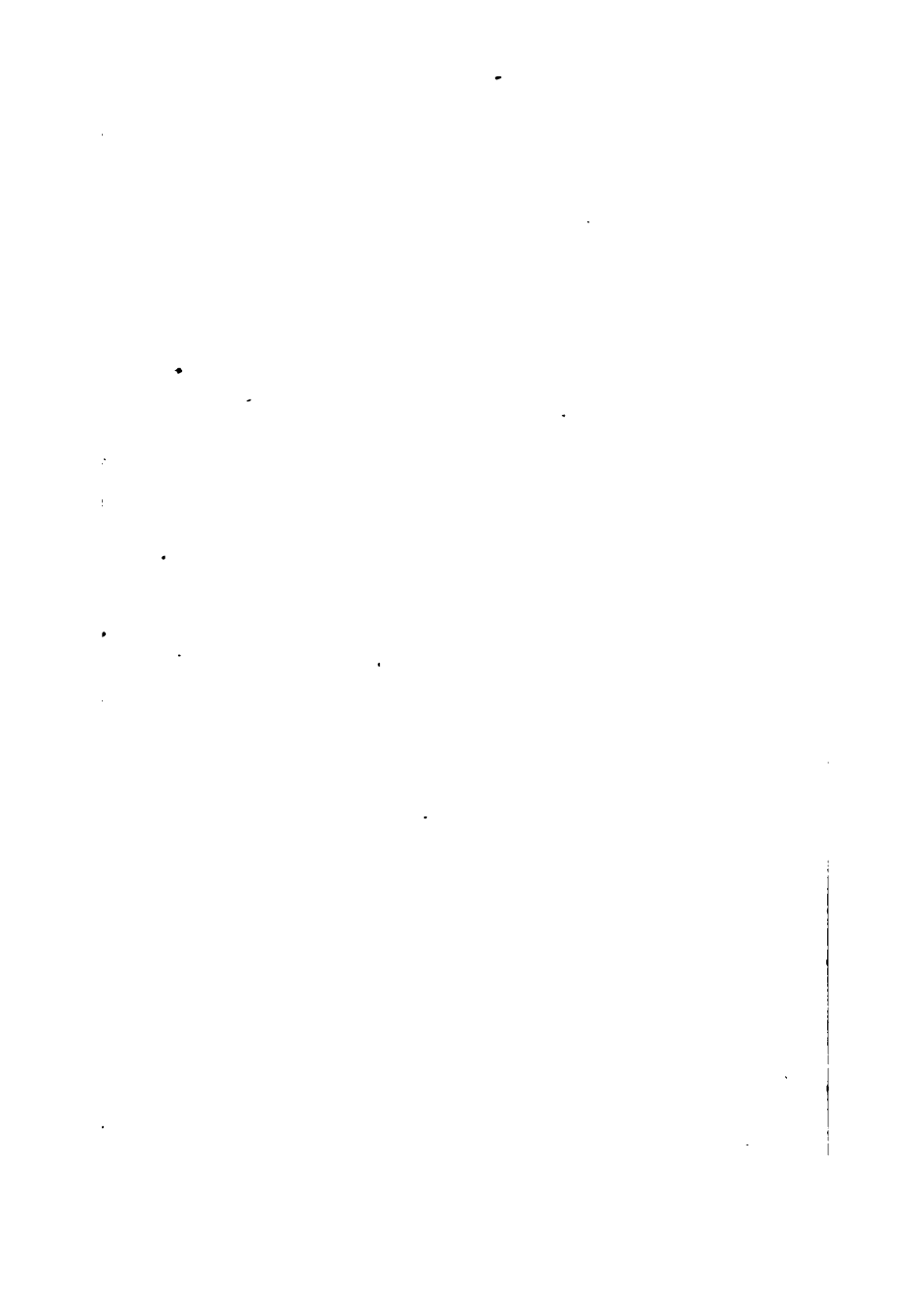
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**THE BOOK OF THE YOUNG.**

OXFORD: PRINTED BY D. A. TALBOYS.

# THE BOOK OF THE YOUNG

AN INVITATION TO EARLY  
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH JONES, M. A.  
OF NEWCHURCH.



OXFORD: D. A. TALBOYS;  
AND 1, BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON.

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## PREFACE

### TO THE YOUNG READER.

MY "Book of the Heart" was intended for readers in general; but the present work is designed for a particular class of young persons. Want of distinct, specific, and appropriate statement and address is a defect in religious books; but it is one which it is more easy to observe than to correct: perhaps the following pages have much of that vagueness which ought to have been avoided. General truths are invaluable: general statements may be correct: but if we would not amuse the mind, but come to the conscience, we must be minute, particular, specific, in what we advance. This is not so easy as some may suppose. I have done what my talents, time, and circumstances allowed me to do. Candidly pardon, my young reader, all that is wrong; and wisely improve all that is right.

I am truly anxious that you, with this book in your hand, or with a far better, should give a decided and serious consideration to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the spiritual circumstances of Man, in your early years. Pause at least a few days, and make spiritual things the



subject of impartial examination. Youth will not last for ever. Do not suffer it to pass away without some serious thoughts of God, of Christ, of your souls, and of eternity. You are but as the flowers of the field: and the most lovely flowers will soon fade: for,

“ . . . . All our pleasure are but children’s toys,  
And as mere shadows presently do pass ;  
As years increasing waning are our joys,  
As we forget our favours in a glass,  
Even as a tale of that which never was :  
Death our delights continually doth sever,  
Virtue alone abandoneth us never.”

So speaks an old English Bard: and if by “Virtue” you understand the whole compass of Christian excellence, his lines are not unworthy of your recollection.

Unhappily, young people in general do not seriously attend to religion. They are captivated with the pleasures and amusements of the present life. Salvation is a neglected subject.—Again, some young persons regard religion, and become a sort of half-way Christians—characters, it is to be feared, far too common among us. They have religion enough to cast around them the lucid halo of a Christian profession, but not enough to make them “Israelites indeed.”—Further, there are some young persons, (and I trust they are a goodly, as well as a lovely, host,) who are, by the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus, the Samuels, the

Obadiah, the Timothies of our world—the lambs of the good Shepherd's flock: and it is of the number of these last that I wish you to be.

My work has not the attractions which it would have had, in the estimation of some, if I had favoured any of the novel notions of our day. Here is nothing to feed a wild imagination; no high views of disputed doctrines, and no ingenious modifications of commonly received doctrines. I dislike reveries, innovations, and those statements of the Gospel which, in fact, only aim at making "the wisdom from above" to quadrate as much as possible with the reasonings of human philosophy, with the preconceptions and prejudices of the human mind; and which simply amount to this, "Accommodate the Gospel to our speculations, and we will receive it." Opposed, as I am, to every thing of this sort, I can only put before you plain truths in a plain way. As one who in a few years at the farthest must give an account of himself to God, I would bring to your view the balm that is in Gilead—not decorated with flowers; not mingled with human ingredients.

It is of the greatest importance for us to be clear and distinct in our views and apprehensions of revealed truth: for in proportion as we are so, our souls are, so to speak, in that frame, state, and attitude which the God of truth approves, and in which He will be with them, and bless them. Hence the deadly nature of error—deadly, when

wilful; and in all circumstances awfully injurious. Where this subject duly considered, many a dreamer and theorist would pause, before he committed to the public those volumes, which are probably to affect the religious character and the eternal condition of many immortal souls.

You may be rather surprised that I have not, in some part or other of my work, noticed or recommended to you any books. Various reasons have induced me not to do this: but I will here briefly observe, As to the Bible, follow the conduct of the "blessed man," as it is described in the second verse of the first Psalm. Next to the Bible, Esteem and study the Book of Common Prayer: there see the true tone and spirit of piety; wise, humble, dignified, and benevolent; decided, but discreet; fervent, but mild and charitable; sober and calm, but not temporising; elevated, but attainable; holy, but not morose and rigid; plain and simple, but not flat and insipid. I have enriched my pages with some of its Collects; I look upon them as ingots of the purest gold. I highly value the works of Archbishop Leighton, and those of Bishops Hall, Reynolds, and Hopkins. Many good volumes, both didactic and biographical, might be mentioned: but I leave you to your own taste and to the advice of judicious friends.

Finally, then, whatever you do, and whatever you read, my last and only request is, "REMEMBER THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH."

Pray for divine grace, that you may give to Salvation and Eternity in early life that attention which subjects of such unspeakable importance and solemnity demand of you and of all men.

*Newchurch in Winwick ;  
June, 1836.*



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## INTRODUCTION.

"Come Lord, come Wisdom, Love, and Power!

Open our ears to hear;

Let us not miss th' accepted hour;

Save, Lord, by Love or Fear."

*Christian Year.*

"No human being is born into the world, however illustrious his lineage, or elevated his rank, or splendid his attainments, over whom, until a mightier power shall break the chain, Satan does not exercise a tyranny the most despotic."—*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

THAT religion is a subject which demands and deserves the serious consideration and decided attention of every person, is a position which very few, either of the young or of the aged, will be inclined to dispute. Each individual, it may be safely presumed, is ready to acknowledge, in the moments of calm reflection, that true piety is the best portion, and that those act most wisely who seek to possess it.

But if we view religion as a subject essentially spiritual, vital, and practical in its nature and influence; as the teacher of man's mind, the renewer of man's heart, and the master and guide of man's life; we are compelled to acknowledge, that it is too commonly disregarded among persons of all ranks



and ages. The moulding and forming period of youth is spent in the thoughtlessness and frivolity, in the dreams and fancies, that characterize that period of life. Manhood is spent in ambition and strife, in toil and care, in plans and vicissitudes. Religion is forgotten in youth amidst the prevalence of gaiety: it is forgotten in manhood through zeal and absorption in secular pursuits: and what remains afterwards but the feeble period of old age, when the past is recollected with sighs, and when the future is anticipated without solid hope?

Youth is, in reference to religion, unspeakably important. Supposing that a young person were certain of living sixty or eighty years in the world, yet if he spend the first twenty of them without seriously attending to it, what, humanly speaking, is the probability of his ever attending to it? Does not fact, so far as our observation can extend, justify this general remark? "If the morning of life be passed in folly and vanity, the noon of it will be spent in pride, worldliness, and toil; and the evening, in a dull, cold, self-deceiving, and incorrigible security."

There is much in human nature that is directly opposed to the humble and pure, the exalted and strict religion of the Bible: but in general the elements of evil are more easily resisted in the hearts of the young than in the hearts of adults. The field of the heart, to speak so, is far less preoccupied in youth, than it is in manhood and in advanced

years. Most young persons, who have been brought up with any propriety, feel, it may be supposed, more or less kindly affected towards the subject of religion. It probably employs many of their thoughts, and engages at times their best feelings. There is in young people a frankness, loveliness, tenderness, susceptibility, teachableness, ingenuousness, which are favourable to serious impressions ; but which are lost, as they become familiar with the errors, arts, manners, and follies of a rude and jarring, of a selfish and seducing world. As they proceed in life, their better thoughts and feelings, if religion be not made the primary concern, soon vanish ; and they become a part of the cold, unreflecting, formal, and worldly multitude. The vanity of the mind, the corruption of the heart, the influence of common maxims, and the wiles of the great Adversary prevail ; and religion is reduced to a matter of customary form and social propriety. We might have guided the growth of the young plants in the nursery : but what can be done with the full-grown trees, which were neglected in former years ? If youth be lost, the training period is lost.

Books on religious subjects abound among us ; and many of them are particularly addressed to the young : but I trust that I may escape censure, when I add one to their number. Of the manner in which I have performed my undertaking, others will judge : I commit it, such as it is, to the blessing of the great Head of the Church, and to the candour of my

readers. I remember the days of my youth ; I feel much for the young : and I would gladly do something for their benefit, if it be the divine Will, before the days of my earthly pilgrimage are concluded.

My work is limited in two respects. It does not contain a full development of religion in a systematical form : it is, at the most, only an introduction to it. Further, though I would hope that no young person can calmly read it without benefit, yet it is especially intended for those young persons who may be accounted—the lovely plants of society. My pupils, then, are the amiable and virtuous :—not the weeds and brambles of the dreary wild, but the flowers of the cultivated border. They are, indeed, supposed to be without true piety : but they have much of that loveliness which wins the admiration, and satisfies the wishes, of a mistaken world. Such I have often seen ; and at the view of them I have said to myself—“ These pleasing and interesting beings have yet only those charms that will soon expire—only virtues which in a great degree will soon perish. Would not our Saviour say to each of them—‘ One thing thou lackest ? ’ ”

In these pages I would lead such young persons to see what they themselves are ; what their circumstances are in the world ; and what religion is, in its gracious character, its transforming operations, and its guiding and governing power. I do not aim to discuss any topic at length. I appeal to the Scriptures, to the heart, and to obvious fact.

The subjects on which I touch are so many and comprehensive, that I am often compelled to satisfy myself with advancing a few hints and general remarks.

It is very far from my wish to be stern and rude in any thing that I adduce : but I certainly wish to be plain and faithful. Some of my statements and some of my expressions may not be agreeable to my youthful readers. But when health or life is concerned, we are not offended with the physician, although he does not write his prescription with classical purity of style—we do not reject the medicine because it is not grateful to the taste. Plain, and not very pleasant, pages may convey the most valuable truths. Medicine that is bitter, and even nauseous, may possess the most salutary virtues.

If some lively young person take up my book, and see that I teach him to look upon himself as a sinful creature ; that I urge him to renounce the world and vanity ; and to choose God for his portion, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier, and the works of piety for his employment ; he may be inclined, perhaps, to close it and cast it aside. “What can this mean ! The flowers of the border vile weeds ! What absurdity and inconsistency is this !” I would only say—“Be not so hasty in forming your conclusion : read, examine, and meditate upon the whole of what I have advanced. If you can then really

prove that I have been guilty of absurdity and inconsistency, I will allow you to condemn the writer, and to despise his work."

A young person of a different character may take up the book. He has some kindly thoughts about religion; some pleasant feelings towards it; some leaning of heart to it. He knows that he does not yet possess what is essential to his happiness, and that the world cannot make him happy. He has the liveliness and thoughtlessness of the young: but there are times in which he has better thoughts and affections than those with which the world supply him. I trust that, by the divine blessing, these pages may be useful to him—leading him to make the wise choice, and to plant his feet firmly in the right way.

The young are pleased with what is animated and elegant in composition; with thoughts that are splendid, and with taste that is exquisite and refined. I cannot, however, conduct my young readers to mountains and forests, to floods and cataracts: if they accompany me, they must be satisfied with an humble valley, and with a softly flowing stream. In other words, I advance only what is solid and simple, in a style adapted to the calm tone of thought which I use. I do not aim to amuse my readers with any thing novel or striking, or to excite any turbulent emotions in their bosoms. I studiously abstain from every thing of that kind. I look upon piety as a fine summer day, when the

sun shines, and when the gale is mild—not as a stormy day, when the lightning flashes, and the thunder roars, and the torrents descend. While, therefore, I would direct them to the solemn and sublime, to the sacred and lovely things of religion, I spend no time in collecting the flowers of rhetoric, or in reducing sentences to harmony.

Let these introductory remarks suffice. As I address you with tenderness and affection, though with great plainness and honesty, and with a sincere desire to promote your present and eternal happiness, let me indulge the hope that you will consider with serious and candid minds what I say. I now commend you and my work to God in humble and earnest prayer.

## THE COLLECT.

“Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy Holy Name, and finally by Thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Blessed God, from whom cometh every good gift and every perfect gift! our best endeavours to promote the glory of Thy Name, and the salvation of immortal souls, are utterly vain and fruitless without Thy especial grace and blessing: may it

please Thee favourably to regard this humble effort to advance the interests of true religion ; and to make it the means of exciting many of the rising generation to renounce error, the world, and vanity ; to remember their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier in their early days ; and to choose that good part which shall never be taken from them.

Look in mercy, O Lord, on all young persons, and pour upon them, in rich abundance, the manifold gifts of Thy Holy Spirit ; that they may not yield to the follies and passions of their inexperienced minds and hearts ; but may become true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be diligent and faithful followers of Him. Keep them, O Lord, from the sins and dangers to which they are peculiarly exposed in an evil and ensnaring world. Make them considerate and serious, humble and devout ; and enable them so to give up themselves to Thee and to Thy service, that they may say in after-life, in the joy and gratitude of their hearts, that they have feared the Lord from their youth.

Be pleased, gracious Father, to deliver those of the young who are virtuous and amiable from the mistakes and delusions to which they are particularly liable. Enlighten their minds and enliven their hearts, that they may see and feel that human virtue is not divine grace ; that mere pleasing dispositions are not spiritual affections, and that mere amiable conduct is not Christian obedience. Suffer them not to trust in themselves, as though they were

righteous : but grant that they may truly know themselves as sinful creatures, and be excited to seek unfeigned piety.

Blessed be Thy Name for the privileges that we enjoy in this favoured land ; for the Scriptures, the public ordinances of religion, and all other means of spiritual improvement. May it please Thee, O Lord, of Thy great goodness, to make us all wise to see, and diligent to use, our inestimable blessings, that we may not bring upon ourselves aggravated condemnation. Prosper all efforts that are made for the diffusion of Thy saving truth among the different classes of mankind—among the rich and poor, the old and young. Grant, if it be Thy good pleasure, that the readers of these pages may be led by Thy grace to enter into the ways of wisdom in their early years. May they escape the various corruptions that are in the world, and continually advance in piety ; abounding here in the fruits of righteousness, and finally obtaining everlasting blessedness, through Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.



## YOUTH.

"Then grudge not thou the anguish keen  
Which makes thee like thy Lord,  
And learn to quit with eye serene  
Thy youth's ideal hoard.  
Thy treasured hopes and raptures high—  
Unmurmuring let them go,  
Nor grieve the bliss should quickly fly  
Which Christ disdained to know."

*Christian Year.*

"Learn the blessedness of having God for your Father, and his kingdom as the home of your future rest. So, while others are wildly pursuing a gilded shadow, which the night of death will ere long shroud in everlasting darkness, you will attain a portion in the felicities above, substantial as the new heavens in which you will dwell, and enduring as the days of eternity."

*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

THE importance of youth with respect to the formation of character, is universally admitted: and this conviction is acted upon by all prudent persons, as to the affairs of the present life. But why is it not acted upon in matters of the highest moment? Surely children ought to be instructed, in a manner and measure suitable to their tender years, to fear and love God; to trust in Christ and to love Him;

to think rightly of the great Sanctifier ; to have some just notions of themselves, of this life, of sin, of piety, of duty, and of the prospects that lie before them in the unseen world. Shall we be always putting off religion to a future period, both as to ourselves, and as to those who are most dear to us ?

But my business here is with the young themselves.—If you postpone attention to religion until you are grown up, you will then probably postpone it until you are grown old : and then, more probably still, the all-important subject will never be regarded. Waste your early days in common frivolity ; and your minds will soon be filled with errors, prejudices, and worldly views, and your hearts will be thoroughly imbued with a worldly taste. The moral field within, to speak so, will soon abound with brambles and noxious weeds. Every chamber of the breast (to change the image,) will be filled with loved, cherished, and enthroned idols. The understanding will become impervious to the light of truth ; and the affections will be alienated from sacred things in proportion as they are attached to worldly objects. To delay attention to religion in youth is, in fact, to form habits and a frame of spirit directly opposed to it ; and to consign yourselves to the dominion of all your spiritual enemies.

You admit that religion is a subject of the first importance, and that it ought to be seriously considered by you in your early days. I can easily

suppose that you have very different frames of mind as to spiritual things. You have peculiar constitutions ; and, therefore, various tastes, aversions, and attachments. In some of you, mirth and levity may be prevailing qualities ; in others, sedateness and gravity. In some there may be an exquisite tenderness of feeling ; in others, a vivid imagination. In some, the love of society and amusement may be the ruling passion : while others may be fond of retirement, reading, and sentimental musing. As to religion, you know more or less about it : you may have kindly dispositions towards it, or strong aversion to it, or a total indifference about it. But I will suppose, that all of you allow, on calm reflection, that religion is—the great subject ; one which cannot be regarded too early or too carefully. Conscience sometimes works even in perverse bosoms.

But in general, youth is the season in which the lighter and more volatile elements of our constitution obtain the ascendancy : it is the season of fancy and of animated feeling. Those of the young who are naturally calm, sedate, retiring, and reflecting, do not, I imagine, form the majority. The nature of human life is not understood in early days : the solemnity that belongs to human existence is not felt : the natural materials of character act with freedom. In some we see pride and vanity : in some, an admiration of fashion and elegance : in some, the fire of ambition. If books are valued,

they are chiefly those which are more calculated to foster the perverseness of youth, than to correct it. The youthful heart is captivated with what is brilliant in imagination and striking in incident ; with what is elegant and exciting.

But a different view may be given of the young. There may be in them a large quantity of those natural and moral elements with which we are delighted. A young person, it may be readily supposed, is dutiful and affectionate in the endearing relations of human life. There is in the virtuous and amiable young a gentleness, a kindness of feeling, a modesty and diffidence, an openness and frank good-nature, a generous benevolence and ardour, and an unfeigned sympathy with those in distress, which are most highly pleasing. With what indignation do they hear of oppression, cruelty, and injustice ? With what satisfaction and delight do they relieve the indigent and sorrowful ? The amiable young person has a smile for all that is pleasing, and a tear for all that is painful. His heart is not cold or selfish. Even the elevation of birth and the brilliance of accomplishment are forgotten in the cottages of the poor, or by the couch of sickness and of age.

What a mingled picture, then, is before us, as we consider what may be called the spontaneous virtues and faults of the young ! In what a deeply interesting point of view do they appear ! What a singular combination and action of moral and men-

tal elements do we behold ! These indeed are pleasant plants, full of life and vigour. These are branches which we love to see :—but at the same time, they are those which we wish to prune, and whose growth we are anxious to guide. But it is impossible to say what they will be at a future period. If they regard those things which they ought to regard, they will be excellent and happy : but if they neglect them, they will become the victims of worldliness, vanity, and vexation.

Who does not readily admire in the young whatever is virtuous and amiable ! Still they are—defective characters. One thing is needful : and in their case, that one thing is yet wanting. Bear with me, my young readers, while I advance a plain statement in a few words.—You are immortal creatures ; but you do not seriously think of immortality. You are the intelligent creatures of the Holy God ; but you do not rightly consider this. You are Christians ; but you do not properly examine the nature of that high character. You are pilgrims here ; but you do not look upward and onward to another world and to everlasting ages. Life is a brief and uncertain span ; but you do not practically regard the frail tenure of all below. It is your duty, and your real happiness, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth ; but your own consciences accuse you of forgetting Him. You are amiable, virtuous, kind, dutiful, affectionate ; the delight of your

parents, relatives, and friends. Is there nothing lacking? Are you truly good? Are you the children of God—the servants and followers of Christ? We see and admit, we love and admire, your *excellences*—but we see, and we would lead you to consider, your *defects*.

I cannot join the world either in a dark or in a brilliant rhapsody: I love discrimination and truth: and I wish you also to love them. I willingly acknowledge your pleasing qualities: but then I say—there is yet one subject which you do not study; an excellence which you do not possess; a happiness which you do not enjoy. There remains one thing which is essential to the perfection of your character, which has hitherto not obtained proper attention; and without this essential thing, all the beauty and loveliness in which you rejoice, is as frail as the flower of the field; as transient as the passing meteor. What is this one thing? A heart-felt reception of, and submission to, the Gospel of our God and Saviour.

Three things, omitting others, may be here mentioned as, in some degree, accounting for your inattention to the greatest of all subjects. I mean, wrong notions of human life; wrong notions of religion; and procrastination. As I shall give a separate chapter to the two former of these subjects, a few general remarks in this place on the last of them will be sufficient.

With respect to human life, I suppose that you

are concluding what may be called, the school-part of it. Certain restraints are taken off. You have threaded the tangled mazes of education, and are arrived at the borders of an extensive and diversified scene. The world is all before you. If your circumstances afford you leisure, you can walk abroad, gather flowers, and plan to-day what you are to see, and do, and enjoy to-morrow. As your busy imagination passes on to the next year, and to following years, you readily promise yourselves unnumbered pleasures. You build castles more splendid than those of eastern romance ; and you picture to yourselves sweet prospects that are perpetually clothed with verdure. Life, in these delirious moments, is to be bright with sunshine ; as fair as the spring, and as calm as the gale of even. New connexions are to be formed ; and every step that you ascend on the ladder of your existence, is not only to widen the prospect, but also to increase your bliss.

As to religion, which may sometimes present itself to your minds, you scarcely know what to think about it. Your Reason and Conscience compel you to approve it ; but your views of it are indistinct, and your feelings respecting it are very confused. Perhaps your preponderating conviction is—"Religion is a very good thing ; but it will be time enough to give it serious attention at a future period. While the spring of life lasts, we will pluck the flowers of spring." The hope, or the

resolve, to regard religion on some future day, reconciles you to the disregard of it at present. You will now treat it as others do : the serious examination of it is postponed. Hence your path is open before you : you join your coevals : you walk in their ways : you visit, and revisit, the springs of earthly delight : and when you have gone round the circle of vanity, and sober years are arrived, you will take up the long-neglected and subordinated theme. Attention to it at present would be a restraint, compelling you to relinquish what you wish to obtain, and to walk in a course too strict and regulated to be compatible with happiness. You approve the subject itself ; you attend its forms : but you will not aim to examine its discoveries, to enter into its spirit, or to assume its yoke.

May I expostulate with you for a moment ? Then I would say—"Ingenuous Youths ! is this the way in which you ought to treat your God and Saviour ? Does He deserve such conduct at your hands ? If you disregard Him in your early days, are you certain that He will not disregard you in future life ? Is this the manner in which you will treat the Bible—the word of God to man ? Is this the manner in which you will treat your immortal souls, the sublime part of your nature ? Is this the manner in which you will treat eternity—compared with which even the long life of Methuselah is an absolute nothing ? If religion be the greatest and



best cause, of which you cannot doubt, then surely it is most wise and reasonable to prefer it to the world. You would not say to a parent, a friend, or a benefactor—"I must to-day do my own will and pleasure: to-morrow, or next week, or next year, I will attend to your requests and directions:"—and can you seriously think of acting thus towards God? Would it not be far better, before you plunge into the world, to pause, to meditate on things, and to make your choice according to the sober dictates of wisdom—not according to the suggestions of worldly feeling? Would it not be wise to consider things in their nature, operations, and results? Think of serious things in a serious manner; and implore the Father of lights to be merciful to you, that you may 'be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.'"

## THE COLLECT.

"O Almighty Lord, and Everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments; that through Thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Gracious Lord God, I thank Thee for being called to serious reflection in my youthful years; for being exhorted to examine spiritual things with becoming attention. I acknowledge that I am Thine, and that I am under every obligation to fear, love, and obey Thee: Thou knowest my foolishness; how apt I am to listen to seducing voices, and to follow vain inclinations; how I put off religion, and cleave to the world, and perversely flatter myself that I shall find happiness in it. In the moments of calm thought, I know that I act very improperly; and I am compelled to condemn myself. If many around me are thoughtless as to their salvation, why should I be so? I see and own that religion is the great and glorious cause, and that it deserves my supreme regard. O how can I venture to put off any longer a subject that is essential to my present and eternal welfare? Pity me, O Lord, a young, feeble, and wayward creature; and so endow me with the light of Thy truth and the power of Thy grace, that I may not be inconsiderate; may not yield to the world and to my own heart; and may not think wrongly of religion, or treat it improperly. I am Thine, O Lord, as Thy creature: I am Thine by Baptismal engagement: O make me Thine also, I beseech Thee, by the effectual operations of Thy Spirit. Deliver me from thoughtlessness, trifling, and delay. Suffer

me not to listen to any vain persuasions ; but enable me to be true to my reason and conscience, and to Thy holy word. Save me from all my enemies : save me from myself. O let me now consider my ways, and the end of all things : and let me enter on that path of righteousness which will lead me to Thyself and everlasting happiness. While the world unfolds before me those prospects which are pleasing to the eye, and promises me those pleasures which are gratifying to the carnal heart, so enlighten, purify, and strengthen my soul, that I may not amuse myself with fallacious hopes, nor be won by the fascinations and attractions of any thing below ; but may always feel and act as an immortal being, who is walking on the verge of eternity. Receive, O gracious Father, these my petitions, and answer them in the multitude of Thy tender mercies, to Thy honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## HUMAN LIFE.

“What is the heaven we idly dream?  
The self-deceiver’s dreary theme,  
A cloudless sun that softly shines,  
Bright maidens and unfailing vines,  
The warrior’s pride, the hunter’s mirth,  
Poor fragments all of this low earth :  
Such as in sleep would hardly soothe  
A soul that once had tasted of immortal Truth.”  
*Christian Year.*

“The present life, instead of being the *whole*, is comparatively *nothing* : a *stage*, a *porch*, a *dream*, a weary day’s *journey*. What is this drop to the ocean before us ? What this moment to Eternity ? As a theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace ; or as a stage on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition ; the present state is infinitely grand and important : but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the Pilgrim, than to persuade him that he is at *Home* ; or to make him forget and drown his eternal interests in such a vision of the night as this life.”—*Cecil*.

YOUTH is the season of feeling, imagination, and dreams ; of projects and expectations. This remark is trite : but it is important to examine the subject, and to invite the young to reflect upon human life with sobriety and truth.

We look upon the young as those who seem to expect that they are to gather roses and violets in every path, and to find no weeds and brambles. So much perhaps, in general, do they look upon the bright side of things, that they forget the mingled and imperfect nature of all below. They anticipate sunshine and serenity, and do not think of the darkness with which they will often be surrounded, or of the tempest which will often rage about them. Their eyes sparkle in joy; their voices are voluble and musical; their hearts are light. They may remind us of birds who have recently left the obscure shelter of the nest, who are gazing on the wide and lovely creation, or trying their sportive wings in the gale, and are free from all apprehension of danger. How far this statement is correct, the youthful reader will determine. A comparatively few young persons of sedate minds, who indulge in no gay fancies; or a few young persons of tender and pensive hearts, who delight more in what is sable than in what is splendid, and in whom fears are more powerful than hopes; do not materially affect a general view.

Human life may be viewed in two respects—what it is in general, and what it may be to particular individuals. As to the latter point, it is evident that the particular portion or lot of individuals is exceedingly varied. Some walk in a path that may be accounted smooth and flowery: they enjoy wealth, health, and friends: they have all

things at hand : their desires are anticipated. But others walk in a rough and thorny path : they are familiar with sickness, or poverty, or bereavement. No young persons can know, from their present circumstances, what their future life will prove. A bright morning is often succeeded by a stormy day : and, on the contrary, a stormy morning may be followed by a calm noon and a pleasant evening.

But if I were to speak of Human Life in general, I would not draw a picture that is enchanting with fictitious splendour, or one that is dismal and repulsive by fictitious gloom. The bright musings of the cheerful and lively, on the one hand, and the dark musings of the pensive and timid, on the other, may never be realized. Those who promise themselves the enjoyment of abundant delight may, in the providence of God, be called to tread an unpleasant path, with weary feet and with sorrowful hearts : and those who see little before them but trouble, change, and trial, may have a large portion of enjoyment.

But let the present question be, What, without entering into particulars, is Human Life ? I reply, It is a plain and sober reality—a mingled course of events—a series of suffering and enjoyment—a time of toil and duty—a period connected with weighty obligations and serious responsibilities—a discipline, an education for other worlds—the vestibule to the temple—the brief preface to a volume that has no end. Human Life leads to

Eternity—to unchanging happiness, or to unchanging woe.

1. Human Life is a sober reality. I assert it to be so, in opposition to fantastic dreams and vain expectations. Let any one, young or adult, indulge himself in the gay expectations of fancy with respect to any future period of life, and he will find when the period arrives, that his expectations were at least in a great measure groundless. The Fairy-land which he had decorated with all that is bright and enchanting, is found to be a common field, with little or nothing more upon it than the ordinary productions of the earth. The fancies of to-day are generally destroyed by the experience of to-morrow. We may refuse to get wisdom by experience, and proceed to make further experiments: but it will only issue in repeated disappointment. Life, I grant, may have what may be called its poetic scenes; but in its regular course it will be found plain prose—a repetition of similar schemes and labours, of the same fears and hopes, of the same joys and sorrows. I speak thus, not to make you dissatisfied or dispirited, but to repress the vagaries of imagination, and to prevent the innumerable evils that spring from mistaken views and feelings: for do not vain expectations respecting the future, lead us, among other results, to neglect the due improvement of the present?

2. Human Life is a mingled scene. It is idle work to draw a picture of mere darkness and dis-

trials : for life undoubtedly has its light and joys. It is equally an idle work to draw a picture of mere splendour and delight ; for life has its gloom and anguish. I will suppose that yours will prove what may be accounted the average lot of human beings in your rank and station. It is most probable, therefore, that you will have a chequered path to tread—a mingled cup to drink. You will have ample reason to rejoice in your many blessings ; and you will often be called to sigh and grieve in trials and vexations. Much, as to this point, depends on the allotments of an all-wise Providence. Much also depends on yourselves ; on the prudence, or the imprudence, which you may exhibit : for as the former will exempt you from many sorrows, so will the latter multiply and aggravate them. In a word, while you anticipate many joys, do not omit the anticipation of many sorrows.

3. Human Life is a course of toil and duty. Supposing that by your temporal circumstances you may be exempted from what is properly called toil or labour, yet every day of man is, or ought to be, a day of duty. Still, therefore, it may be justly said, that labour is the lot of man. There will be a singular contrast between the dreams of leisure, ease, independence, and enjoyment with which you may now amuse yourselves, and the real experience of future life, when as each morning returns you see a day of labour before you, and



when as each evening arrives, you find yourselves weary and exhausted.

But whatever be the case respecting toil, the yoke of duty cannot be shaken off. You are, and you always will be, the creatures of moral obligation ; the creatures of duty : and duty implies activity. There are duties which we owe to God, to man, and to ourselves : and none of them can be neglected with impunity. Man is not born into the world to please himself—to do his own will, and to make his existence here a period of gratification—but to discharge his duties ; and these are multiplied with the different relations which he may sustain in his progress through life.

4. Human Life stands connected with the most serious responsibility. Man is always an accountable being. If you were summoned into eternity in your youthful years, would you not have to give an account of yourselves to God ? This is a most weighty consideration—one that you ought to cherish. But if you live fifty or sixty years in the world, you will have to render an account to God of the manner in which you have spent that time. If you forget this, and waste your time and abuse your talents in folly and vanity, the consequences will be awful. God is a gracious Father ; but He is also a righteous Judge. The last day will be a day of horror and confusion to unfaithful souls. The final judgment may be now disregarded or for-

gotten : but it will be found to be a serious thing, and that by all men.

5. Human Life is an education for other worlds—in the school of Wisdom for a world of glory, or in the school of Folly for a world of shame and woe. You have spent some years in the process of education for this world : and youth and all our years ought to be viewed and spent as a process of education for an eternal state. Such indeed it is : it cannot be otherwise. It is in religion as in the temporal life. The child who wastes his first years in trifling and idleness, cannot be in society that character which he might have been, if he had carefully improved them. In like manner, he who wastes the present life in care, pleasure, and amusement, cannot be in the future state what he would have been, if he had improved it as a responsible being. Such as we are upon earth, such we shall be for ever. If we serve God here, we shall enjoy His presence hereafter. If we live the slaves of sin and of the world, we shall be for ever undone. Every hour of our present existence is connected with our eternal destiny. If you seek the wisdom from above, and are guided by it, you are educating yourselves for the fruition of glory and happiness : but if error and corruption, if the manners and maxims of the world, be your masters and guides, you advance in evil, and you daily fit yourselves more and more for the awful destiny of rejected souls.

6. Human Life is a vestibule to the temple—a preface to an endless volume. Shall that temple, my young readers, be in your case the temple of light or of darkness; the mansions of glory, or the prison of despair? Shall that volume be written with the radiant characters of life and joy, or shall you find it be full of unmitigated anguish and misery? This is a solemn inquiry. We leave this world; some in youth, some in manhood, and the residue in old age: and what is our leaving it, but an entrance, in our immortal nature, on an everlasting and unchangeable state? We are not left in ignorance on this important subject. Our existence here is only a preparatory stage of being: and on that stage, so brief and uncertain, the character of our final condition depends.

Such is Human Life, if it be properly considered: and such are a few of the thoughts which I wish you to entertain respecting it. Do not say that I am strict and gloomy, and that young persons have no business to damp their spirits, or to diminish their pleasures, by such grave considerations. I treat you as rational creatures. I call upon you to reflect as intelligent and moral beings. I am not aware that the human mind can become acquainted with sound religious sentiments at a too early period. Many have lamented that they did not regard religion in their youthful years: but who ever lamented that he surrendered himself to God and His service in early life? Those are your

best friends who endeavour to dissipate the illusions; to correct the errors, and to prevent the mistakes, to which you are exposed in the bright morning of your days.

Check, then, my young friends, the operations of fancy: control your ardent feelings: and meditate on human life with calmness and sobriety. Is there not one thing which you will want, in order that you may successfully resist temptation; that you may endure troubles with composure; that you may perform your duties with fidelity; that you may act as accountable beings? Is not that one thing, the adoption of true religion as your light and life, your guide and portion? If the character of fifty years depended on the conduct of one day, you certainly would not spend an hour or a minute of that day in a careless manner. Eternity depends on the brief and uncertain day of life: and shall any portion of that day be spent as if there were no Eternity?

#### THE COLLECT.

“Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immor-

tal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever." Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O Merciful and Gracious God, help me to think with seriousness on my condition and duty in this world. Thou knowest how inconsiderate I am; how ready I am to look upon this life as if I had nothing to do in it, but to seek my own pleasure, and to execute my own purposes. O deliver me from the folly and levity to which I am prone: and give me grace duly to remember in my youthful years that I am Thine; that I am a stranger here; that life is the period given to me in which I am to prepare for a final state of being. Give me wisdom rightly to consider that my business here is not to trifle, but to be serious; not to waste time, but to improve it; not to think of gratification, but of duty; not to seek my happiness from the world, but in Thee and in Thy service. Enlighten my mind, O Lord, and influence my heart, so that I may have a sound judgment respecting human life, and act in agreement with it. Help me to look upon it as the only season granted me in which the faults of my nature may be removed, and peace with Thee secured, by the true acceptance of Christ through faith. Thou only knowest what my allotment in this world will be: and I would submit to Thy will and providence with cheerful resignation. But I beseech Thee to visit me with the com-

munications of Thy heavenly grace, that in all circumstances I may spend my days to Thy honour and glory, and to the salvation of my soul. Let not my vain and inexperienced mind, let not worldly maxims and examples, so prevail as at any time to make me careless about spiritual and eternal things. Deeply impress my heart with the important truth, that it ought to be my daily care and study to prepare for death and eternity; and let all my conduct correspond with such a conviction. Instead of vain dreams about earthly happiness, let it be my great concern so to fear, love, and obey Thee, according to the Gospel of Christ, that I may enjoy Thy favour, and be prepared for another world whenever the hour of death may arrive. Mercifully hear and answer these my petitions, O gracious Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

of the world, and the world is averse to religion, some of you might remark with great justice, that my position was far from being true. The fact perhaps is, that some of them are kindly disposed towards it, and think highly of it; that some think but little, or not at all, about it; and that some are strongly disinclined to it, and look upon it as a gloomy subject, a rigid discipline, a heavy yoke, an unreasonable restraint. May I not add, that there is a secret aversion to religion, even in many of these

"Bless'd eyes, which see the things we see!"

And yet this tree of life hath prov'd,

To many a soul a poison tree,

Beheld, and not below'd.

So like an angel's is our bliss

(Oh! thought to comfort and appal)

It needs must bring, if used amiss,

An angel's hopeless fall."—*Christian Weiland*

"The cause of enmity against real Christianity is in the heart. The angel Gabriel might exhibit the truth, but the heart would rise in enmity. To suppose that there is any way of preaching the Cross so as not to offend the world, is to know nothing of the subject."

*Cecil.*

If I were to say without any discrimination, that young persons are averse to religion, some of you might remark with great justice, that my position was far from being true. The fact perhaps is, that some of them are kindly disposed towards it, and think highly of it; that some think but little, or not at all, about it; and that some are strongly disinclined to it, and look upon it as a gloomy subject, a rigid discipline, a heavy yoke, an unreasonable restraint. May I not add, that there is a secret aversion to religion, even in many of these

who approve it? When the world and religion are put in direct contrast, when they are brought in competition with each other, a distaste is felt towards the latter; and then it is conveniently laid aside as a subject for consideration on some future day.

I am no advocate for vague and sweeping statements of any sort. In heaven all is perfect goodness: in hell all is perfect evil: we upon earth are in a mingled state, so that there may be more evil combined with goodness, and more goodness combined with evil, than we are generally inclined to admit. I may, however, safely say, that aversion to religion is very common: and my object in the present chapter is to show some of the sources of it, and also its unreasonableness: for aversion to religion can only be grounded on prejudices; and it ought to be treated accordingly.

1. Perhaps you say that religion has no grandeur. Many seem to think so: and it is a very unfortunate circumstance that they should entertain such a notion. You exult and glow when you read the lofty and animated descants of the poet, who floats on the surface of things, who dazzles your eyes with bright colours, who pleases you with fine and shadowy forms, and leaves all in the attitude of a splendid, intangible generality. Your minds are expanded: your imaginations are delighted. But when you turn to religion, you hear of sin and guilt, of repentance and self-denial, of



conversion, warfare, humility, sacrifice, vigilance, duty: and these appear to you in such a repulsive form, that, in your estimation, the subject to which they belong must be destitute of all magnificence and beauty. The heroes of the novel and of the romance are animated and generous: but the disciple of religion, as you think, is a flat and heartless character. Your ungrounded ideas act with a chilling power on the mind: the soul is alarmed, and shrinks back, at the name of religion. I would only observe, that you do not yet rightly understand the terms mentioned above which you condemn; and you censure a whole subject from unjust notions of a part of it. This, you will allow, is neither wise nor candid conduct.

It is very true, that religion will dissipate mere fancied splendour, and teach you to look upon the world and yourselves in a just light. It will lead you to discoveries which at first will not be agreeable to you; and it will make you familiar with feelings which at present you are not inclined to cherish. But does it follow from this, that it is destitute of grandeur? If there is any subject that is stamped with it, religion is that subject. That subject which treats of things invisible, infinite, unchangeable, eternal; which relates to God, the soul, and salvation; which raises man from this world to another; which imparts to him some of the attributes of his Creator; which fits a feeble and polluted being for the society of angels and for

the presence of Jehovah—that subject destitute of sublimity and grandeur! All glory compared with the glory of religion, is only as the transient blaze of a meteor compared with the perpetual effulgence of the sun. Aversion to religion, therefore, on this ground is absolutely preposterous.

2. Perhaps you think that religion is harsh and severe. The careless world seem to entertain this notion; and you may listen to their statements. Yes, therefore, look upon religion as a stern schoolmaster, not as a kind friend; as a rigid tyrant, not as a mild and gentle governour; as a severe master exacting service, not as a gracious benefactor conferring many and inestimable benefits; as a winter's storm, or as a desolating flood, not as the spring's sweet smile, or as the refreshing and invigorating shower. You have been taught, that youth is the period of pastime, when you are to look about you, to see and to be seen, to learn what the world is, and to enjoy yourselves in it. With religion you have associated ideas of sourness, sternness, and melancholy, because it condemns what most persons regard, and enjoins what most neglect. You think that it would destroy your happiness. A most strange notion indeed! The love of God, the imitation of Christ, the lessons and laws of the wisdom from above—these accounted a blight and mildew, that render the scene around you a field of deformity and death! If you are not to have the companions and the



Content indeed to sojourn while he must  
Below the skies, but having such his home.

The World o'erlooks him. . . . .

He cannot skim the ground like summer birds,

Pursuing gilded flies ; and such he deems

Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.

Therefore in Contemplation is his bliss,

Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth

She makes familiar with a Heaven unseen,

And shows him glories yet to be revealed."

3. But you may perhaps say, that religion is a derided subject. If those are fools who make a mock at sin, what are they who make a mock at religion ? But, then, a subject that is derided, and which exposes its disciples to ridicule, cannot, you seem to think, deserve your cordial attachment. I can only ask you, Is such a sacred and momentous subject as religion to be treated with ridicule ? Can the derision of it by the gay and thoughtless be regarded by you for a single moment, except it be to awaken in your bosoms feelings of pity for them ? The soul of any man who can laugh at religion is an awful object for our contemplation. But most pitifully weak and mistaken is he who allows himself to be influenced in his determinations by such profane levity. Let a thousand dogs bay at the moon : yet does not she, the mild queen of night, proceed in her majestic course through the heavens, rejoicing to reflect the glory of the sun ?

4. You may perhaps object, that religion is regarded chiefly by persons of weak minds, or by those who have been gross sinners, or by selfish and designing characters. Much of this sort is frequently said, and more is intimated, to prejudice men against it, by a degrading estimate of its disciples. But you cannot wish me to expatiate here; since all this, in fact, is gross and palpable calumny. If in every age a great quantity of talent has been enlisted on the side of error, profligacy, and folly, yet you cannot be ignorant that religion has had in all ages those names on her records, which by no means shrink from a comparison with the most accomplished of its adversaries, as it relates to intellect. Religion has had her poets, sages, and scholars; the splendid, the wise, and the profound; who beheld her majesty, admired her beauty, owned her authority, delighted to walk in her paths, and accounted her gifts the most invaluable treasures.—Will the calumniators of religion maintain, that the thousands who, blessed be God, seriously regard it at present in this land, are in fact the most despicable part of our population?

5. But you may proceed to remark, that the advocates of religion are frequently found to be no ornaments to their cause. If you take the sarcasms of the gay, and the invectives of the malignant, for truth and solid argument, you will, I admit, think very meanly of the pious. Or perhaps:

you have seen and heard things among some religious people, that were repulsive to your feelings. As to the first point, I would observe, The testimony of an enemy ought to be well examined before it is credited. As to the second point, I would ask you, Are you justified in cherishing aversion to religion because some of its friends speak absurdly, or act inconsistently ! Surely the sacred cause is not to be judged of either from what some say, or from what others do, but by what it really and confessedly is in itself. Your business is to receive it, and then to exhibit it without the faults which you condemn.

I do not wish for a moment to deny, conceal, or palliate the real faults of Christians : but whatever these are, or may be, who, I ask, are pouring into society, by their benevolence, plans, actions, and examples, the largest measure of that moral excellence which is the happiness of human beings and the stability of empires ? Are they the derided and reviled followers of Christ, or the gay and thoughtless votaries of the world, who accomplish this object ? If religious persons, even in many instances, are not what we could wish them to be, yet it is but justice to say, that if the attribute " excellent " belong to any of our species, we must assign it to them.

6. You may say that religion will make you singular, and that you cannot endure singularity. You must join your friends : you must go with

your companions to their amusements. If you do not act thus, you will be regarded as morose and peevish beings. You must be what other young people are. How many a pleasing young person does the dread of laughter and of singularity lead to stifle the convictions of conscience! How many have yielded to the solicitations of companions, to their sorrow, confusion, and ruin! Your objection, however, furnishes but a feeble argument indeed for disliking religion. The laugh and taunt and jest may be your portion for a season: but if you are firm and consistent, if you are wise, and adorn your cause, the world will soon be silent, and turn and admire that excellence which they have eyes to see, but not courage to seek for themselves.

"So spake the Cherub: and his grave rebuke,  
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace  
Invincible: abashed the Devil stood,  
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
Virtue in her shape how lovely."

7. But you may perhaps remark, that religion is a cold, tame, common subject, the truths of which are familiar to most persons. Your feelings are alive, your fancies are active, and you suppose that religion has no aliment suitable for you. You do not think yourselves born to fly and soar; and you look upon religion as a monotonous theme, that will compel you to walk in a dull circle. Un- doubtedly divine truth is calm and sober, moderate

and dignified, but I ask you to show up any one topic in it which is not calculated to interest the heart, to enlarge the mind, and to call into action the noblest powers of the soul. You may see religion reduced to a mere rite and form; or to a doctrine, speculation, and dispute; or to a peculiar dialect. But what has this perverseness to do with the subject? The moment we speak of Jehovah, of good and evil, the moral elements of the universe, and of eternal and unchangeable prospects and destinies, the trifling are awed, and the serious are delighted. These are things which will allow you to feel as strongly as you choose, and to soar as high as you are capable of doing. The world interests you now; but that interest will diminish; and what charms you at present will cease to charm you; unless you become the drivelling dotards of folly. But religion will diffuse a vital power, a moral sensibility, through all your faculties, and produce greater interest as you advance in years. Other fires may languish and expire: but that which is from above, kindled on the altar of the Christian heart, is an undecaying and inextinguishable fire.

What I have advanced is sufficient, I trust, to show you that aversion to religion is unjust and unreasonable; only grounded on prejudices which have no foundation, but which are agreeable to a heart that dislikes holiness, that is self-willed and impatient of control—disposed, alas, to sub-



mit to the rightful dominion of the Lord of heaven and earth.

Religion, having God for its author, truth for its substance, and happiness for its end, is not a subject to be treated either with aversion or indifference: on the contrary, it demands from its authority, and deserves from its excellence, our prompt submission, our highest esteem, and our cordial love. It is the manifestation to man of Him who is light and love. It is our only guide, to final glory. Our great business in this world is with God, our souls, and eternity; and in that business the Scriptures are our teacher. Let me admonish the youthful reader to search them with an humble and devout spirit: and I would assure him, that he will in due time find Religion to be, if I may use the expression, an angel from above, whose robe is spotless, whose eye is bright in joy, whose countenance beams with benevolence and compassion, whose voice is wisdom and mercy, whose spirit is sublime and pure, who points with one hand to the path of righteousness, and with the other to the everlasting mansions of life and blessedness. Let him enthrone her in his heart, and allow her to form his life; and he will rejoice in time and for evermore: but if he yield to prejudice and the natural heart, and reject her, he will not escape with impunity. If religion received does not save the soul, religion rejected will aggravate its guilt and increase its condemnation.

THE COLLECT.

108 O Lord, raise up (we pray Thee) Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end." Amen.

THE PRAYER.

THE PRAYER.

O Blessed Lord God, how great is Thy goodness in having given to man the revelation of Thyself and of Thy will in Thy holy word! How ought I to bless and praise Thee for such an inestimable gift! But I take shame to myself for having cherished in my heart any indifference to it, or disinclination towards it. What a clear and melancholy proof have I here of the working of sin within me—of an evil heart and of a vain mind! When, as now, I seriously think on spiritual things, how can I listen any longer to a thoughtless world, or to my own perverse mind! All which relates to Thee, great God, must be good and glorious. I ought to employ my various powers, willingly and thankfully, in studying Thy word, in seeking Thy gifts, and in doing Thy commandments. Have mercy upon me, I beseech

Thee, and deliver me from every wrong thought and feeling respecting religion. Enlighten and purify my soul, that I may have a sound judgment in all things, and cherish right dispositions towards Thee, Thy word, and Thy ways. Thou knowest my corruption, weakness, and folly; and how ready I have been to attend to the vain doctrines of men, rather than to those of truth. O save me henceforth from such perverseness, and let me no longer follow the prejudices to which I have so long yielded. Let me neither form an estimate of religion from the distorted, or at best imperfect exhibitions of it which are made by its professors; nor under the influence of a vitiated spiritual taste: but let me view it as it is delineated in Thy word, and as exemplified by Christ Himself. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see what is good and lovely and glorious: purify my affections and taste, that I may love it and delight in it: and strengthen all my faculties, that I may seek it and obtain it. Thus, O Lord, may I be of the number of those who please Thee in will and deed, and be Thine here and for ever, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour. Amen.

## CHARACTER OF RELIGION.

"How charming is divine Philosophy!

Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,

But musical as is Apollo's lute,

And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,

Where no crude surfeit reigns."—*Milton*.

"Christianity wears an enchanting form to all, who can penetrate through the mists thrown round it by its false friends and its avowed foes."—*Cecil*.

"The Gospel is wonderful. It teaches man to acknowledge himself vile, and even abominable, yet requires him at the same time, to aspire to a resemblance of God."—*Pascal*.

Being desirous that you should form right notions of religion, I would caution you against the prejudices which many unreasonably entertain respecting it, and also against those crude and fanciful notions of it which are so pleasing to others. If you allow yourselves to be influenced by the former, you may never give the subject any serious attention: and if you yield to the latter, you may afterwards relinquish it, because it does not fulfil your ungrounded expectations. I cannot, therefore, describe to you a paradise which you will not find this side the grave. The present

world is, even to the religious, a world of change, trial, and suffering.

" You'll find, and trust superior years,  
The vale of life a vale of tears."

Religion, undoubtedly, will not exempt you from feeling what the world, and what a corrupt nature, are. The garden without a thorn or weed, the path without a sharp stone or a bramble, the sky without a cloud, and the stream that is always clear, form a delightful picture—but where is its prototype? where is it to be realized? Many years may not elapse before you become more or less familiar with sighs, solicitude, and anguish. But though religion will not exempt you from troubles, it will enable you to endure them, and to improve them. If you choose the world as your portion, you will have no true joy even in prosperity: but if you choose religion, you will have it even in adversity. The true Christian is far happier amidst his trials and sorrows, than the man of the world is amidst his delights and merriment.

I lay this down, then, as a just position—Religion will do all for you in this preliminary state of being that is essential to your true happiness. If I were familiarly conversing with you, in your calm and reflecting moments, you would own—that you wished to be good—to be happy—not to live in vain—to have comfort and support in

trying seasons—to have it in your power at a future period to look back upon a well-spent life—and, which is the crown of all, to be happy in the future state. If such really be your wishes, the world with its wisdom, riches, and pleasures, will never enable you to accomplish any one of them : but religion will enable you to accomplish them all.

1. You wish to be good : and religion will make you so ; not by fine notions of moral fitness, expedience, pride, and honour ; not with a few decorations of social virtue ; but by giving you the true knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, by making you acquainted with yourselves, and by renewing your souls. It will make you good by making you like God ; impressing upon you the image in which man was created. Likeness to the glorious God—surely you hear and you meditate upon the expression with delight and awe. Can you conceive a brighter beauty or a higher grandeur ? It is impossible. But here you see that goodness which religion imparts.

2. You wish to be happy : and religion will make you so, and that in the deep and habitual feelings of your souls. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you”—thus spake our Saviour. The world gives happiness. The sensualist, the avaricious, the ambitious, the philosopher, the gay trifler—all have what they account happiness. But religion gives happiness to man—a true, abid-

ing, everlasting peace—peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ—peace with our own consciences—peace with our fellow-creatures. Religion is holy love—and that love is happiness.

Are you happy? "O yes," may be the prompt reply, "very happy." Are you happy in your souls, as the children of God? Here you are silent; you blush; you are confused. Well then; the happiness that you have in the world is but a fading plant: that which religion gives is the true amaranth. Your pleasures delight a corrupt or low taste; but those of religion invigorate and refine the soul. Religion leads you to the right source—the Fountain of living waters. It leads you in the right path—in the way of righteousness. It employs you in the right service—doing the will of God. It inspires you with the right taste—a taste for divine and heavenly things. It enlarges, elevates, animates, purifies, satisfies the soul. The person who is living in sin, however happy he may think himself, is only happy while the sun of prosperity shines upon him: but the truly good man has happiness at all seasons—in changes and trials, in sickness and old age, and at the approach of death.

3. You wish to be useful: and religion will teach you how to employ your time, faculties, and talents in your respective places, so that you will not live in vain. You may now rejoice in company, amusement, gaiety, and trifling: but this

cannot be the case for any long time : for human life is a course of laborious duties. You will soon lay aside the chaplets of fancy for the yoke of servile vice. But for what object, and by what laws, and after what examples will you live? You ought to be trees of righteousness, bearing much and good fruit, to the glory of God : but such you can become only by imbibing the vital principles of the gospel, and by acting according to its laws. Thus taught, influenced, and guided, you will acquit yourselves as God's faithful servants. You will be useful in society ; promoting, through the divine blessing, the happiness of others : and while you are so, you will be increasingly happy in yourselves. " He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

4. You wish to have support and comfort in the trials, changes, and sorrows of human life : and religion will grant you these blessings. It is emphatically the comforter of the afflicted. You may have plenty, friends, and physicians in seasons of sickness. You may have advisers in difficulties. Yet in those lowering days, when you walk in the shadowy path of suffering, you will need consolation which no human being can impart. It is, in fact, in the extremes of human condition, that the power of religion is most truly felt and conspicuously seen. Happy is the individual who can say in a trying season—"I am tried and afflicted : but I know my support and my resources : I now



look simply to the sole Fountain of blessedness." The world may amuse and please and flatter you in the days of youth, of health, and of vivacity : but it will fail you in all the trying circumstances of life. Not so Religion. She will faithfully accompany you through every stage of your existence : she will direct you in perplexity, defend you in danger, and furnish you with the purest consolation in your deepest distresses.

5. You wish to look back, at a future period, on a well-spent life : and religion, as is evident from what has been just advanced, will give you this satisfaction. What can a votary of the world say, however correct he may have been as to his moral conduct, when he comes to his last days ? " I have enjoyed the delights which the world gave me ; I have gained wealth, and made my family comfortable ; I have tasted the pleasures of learning ; I have injured no man, and forgive all who may have injured me ; I have walked through the world virtuously and honourably ; I have had the respect and love of many ; my character has not been stained with any thing mean or vicious ; I have regularly attended my Church ; and if my life has not been so good as it might have been, yet I hope that upon the whole it has not been a bad one." Here I would ask—Does such a review of life satisfy you ? I trust that you say without hesitation—No.

Hear, then, the true Christian. What does he

say in the evening of his days? "I am soon to go into the presence of the holy God; to exchange time for eternity. I am a sinful creature, depending entirely on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. But I have the testimony of my conscience, that I have loved Christ and believed in Him. The Holy Spirit has wrought in me a good work of religion. I have followed Christ; though, alas, far too imperfectly. I have warred against my spiritual enemies. I have cultivated holiness. I have made the Scriptures my rule of action. By divine grace I have endeavoured to improve my talents. I trust I may say, that, through the almighty goodness, I have not lived in vain. By grace I am what I am: and by that grace I have in some measure lived to God." I again ask—Does a review of this kind satisfy you? You say that it does. If, then, in the sober and solemn days of age, or when sickness is your lot, or death unexpectedly arrives, you would look upon the past with humble and joyful gratitude, let the divine wisdom be your teacher and guide.

6. You wish to be happy in a future state: and the great object of religion is to conduct you to eternal blessedness. However numerous your amusements may be, your cares, companions, purposes, and dreams, there are moments, I trust, in which you think of eternity. Neighbours, friends, and relatives die: at such seasons the thoughts of a future state rush powerfully on your

minds. You cannot endure the idea of being excluded from the world of bliss and glory—of being consigned to darkness, anguish, and despair. But what will save you from the misery that you would shun, and raise you to the happiness that you would enjoy? The words of Christ, and those only, are the words of eternal life. The way of righteousness, and that only, leads man to final felicity. By faith in Christ is sin forgiven—by the Spirit of Christ is the soul sanctified. By the power of divine grace the true Christian is preserved in an evil world, and rendered meet for heaven. In short, it is true religion, it is the gospel of Christ, understood, received, felt, and acted upon, which gives man the excellence that fits him for the blessed state of perfect holiness, life, and joy.

In this manner I would lead you, my young reader, to see the real character of religion; not by any declamatory expatiating on its nature and excellence, but by a calm statement of its operations and effects. The conclusion at which we now arrive is simply this, All which men say against religion amounts to nothing, and only shows their ignorance of it, and disinclination to it. Further, religion, whether we consider its nature or its operations, has every attribute that satisfies and delights the mind which looks upon it in a proper manner.

Religion, it is true, may prove the source of

greater or of less measures of sensible or conscious spiritual enjoyment ; and that from various causes. It is by no means to be supposed that all real Christians have the same measure and degree of happy thought and feeling. But without genuine piety, man, however splendid his temporal condition may be, is a destitute, forlorn, and miserable being : and, on the contrary, with genuine piety, man, though he walk in the path of obscurity, poverty, or affliction, is the possessor of substantial happiness. Religion has much influence on the natural and social life, by the temperance and prudence, the kindness and calmness, which it inculcates and produces. But it is pre-eminently—the affair of the soul : and the more purely, unreservedly, and fully the true believer enters into it, the more will he see of its glory and feel of its consolations ; the more entirely will he be convinced, that its voice is truth, that its spirit is love, that its yoke is easy, that its service is perfect freedom, that the water from its spring is pure and refreshing, that its fruits are pleasant to the taste, and that all its operations are—the communication of blessedness to the immortal soul.

## THE COLLECT.

“ Almighty God, who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit ; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and

evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort ; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end." Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O God and Heavenly Father, I cannot but acknowledge, on serious thought, that religion demands my supreme regard ;—that the gospel is worthy of all acceptance. If I follow the world in their errors, follies, and vanities, I shall enjoy their pleasures, and be such as they are : but if I act in this manner, I cannot be a true Christian ; I cannot answer the purpose for which I was created ; I cannot enjoy Thy favour and eternal happiness. An unchangeable eternity depends on the few and uncertain days of this life. O, deeply impress my heart with this solemn thought : and enable me by Thy grace to spend every day with a due recollection of what lies before me, and as I shall wish, when my last hours arrive, that I had spent it. The world will only employ me in worldly things, which will soon leave me, or I shall soon leave them. It is Thy word only, O Lord, that teaches me how to live ; how to use the world, to spend my time, and to employ my faculties, so that I may be happy and useful here, and be blessed and glorious for ever. The world, with all its boasted treasures and specious promises, will do nothing for me, except it be to

amuse me, cheat me, and ruin me. It is the gospel of Thy dear Son, it is the wisdom from above, that will enlighten, renew, and exalt me; that will raise me from death to life, from slavery to liberty; that will make me humble in prosperity, and resigned in affliction; that will make me useful to others, and happy in myself; that will make me blessed here and for ever. This I now see to be the plain and indisputable case. Grant me grace, O Lord, that I may retain this conviction, and henceforward act more and more upon it. Grant that I may renounce the world, and every doctrine of error. Lead me, I beseech Thee, into the knowledge and experience of true godliness, that I may glorify Thee by a life faithfully devoted to Thy service, and be Thine both here and for evermore, through Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## RELIGION A SUBSTITUTION.

"Two worlds are ours : 'tis only sin  
Forbids us to descry  
The mystic heaven and earth within,  
Plain as the sea and sky.  
Thou, who hast given me eyes to see  
And love this sight so fair,  
Give me a heart to find out Thee,  
And read Thee every where."

*Christian Year.*

"Bring spiritual things to spiritual : debase not thy spiritual and high-born soul by matching it to the low and inferior things of the world : let not thy pure and spiritual soul be unequally yoked with the dregs and dross of any worldly enjoyment. God and Christ and the things of eternity are suitable to the soul : they are spiritual, like thy spiritual and better nature : and though to a carnal heart these seem but empty and notional things, yet a child of God tastes more sweetness and comfort in these things, than in whatever the world can present unto him. The love of God, the consolations of his Spirit, actings of grace, hopes of glory,—these invisible things,—these are the true riches."—*Bp. Hopkins.*

WISHING you, my youthful readers, to become Christians in the full and proper sense of the word,

and attempting to be your guide, I would lead you to estimate every thing according to its real nature and value. In this chapter, therefore, I shall state an idea of religion which you may expand at your leisure, and which will enable you to meet some objections which you may frequently hear. Many persons speak of religion as if it were only *privative* in its nature ; that is, as if it took much from man, and conferred nothing upon him. It is thus partially contemplated, and held up to view as if it were nothing but sacrifice, mortification, self-denial, and toilsome and irksome service : and thus, very naturally, a strong prejudice is excited against it. If, indeed, it deprive man of all delightful feelings and objects, who can think for a moment of attending to it !

But I maintain that religion may be justly viewed as a Substitution. It is very true, that it calls us to renunciation, self-denial, discipline, and service. But this is only a part of the truth : for it never deprives us of any one thing without putting a far better in its place. The common idea is partial and unjust. If old things pass away, the individual is not left destitute ; for all things become new. New objects take the place of old ones. Old pursuits and old tastes are superseded by new ones. If therefore men fluently enumerate the things of which religion deprives us, let them also as fluently enumerate, as is just and



reasonable in such a case, the blessings, tastes, and pursuits with which it renders us familiar.

We live, as it were, in a twofold state. There are two worlds, the material and the spiritual; and there are, consequently, two classes of objects; two modes of proceeding, two sorts of taste. Hence these questions obviously present themselves to us, Which world is best? what objects are most eligible? what taste ought we to cultivate? in what path ought we to walk? Let the men of the earth have the material world; its objects, delights, and pursuits; with tastes suited to it: yet surely the men of religion have the spiritual world; its objects, delights, and pursuits; with tastes suited to it. Hence the case, when properly considered, amounts to this—Both parties have their objects, tastes, pursuits, and enjoyments: but which party acts wisely, and is most happy,—that which subordinates the spiritual world to the material, or that which subordinates the material world to the spiritual?

1. Religion implies a change of masters, and therefore of services. He who is careless about religion is the servant of Sin. The world, the flesh, and Satan, all vain and evil passions and desires, are his masters. But religion causes a man to renounce these tyrants; to break off their fetters, and to cast off their yoke. Does it leave him without a master or ruler? No; it leads

him to acknowledge the rightful authority of God; to take upon him the yoke of Christ; to employ his faculties as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Thus religion, at its commencement, is not a mere negative thing, but positive: it is not a mere relinquishment, but also an engagement. It is a change—a change of masters and services: and I may leave you to decide what master and what service men ought to choose, and what it is their advantage to choose.

2. Again, religion effects a change of objects. All men have their objects: and what are those of worldly men? We admit, that they are exceedingly various:—wealth, renown, elevation, grandeur, favour, pleasure, amusement. They have their plans and purposes. Their chief desire is to prosper in the world, and to live comfortably. But religious persons have their objects. They are thankful for the temporal blessings which they enjoy; and they rightly discharge their duties, and perform their labours, as the members of human society. But they subordinate the world. Their proper objects are divine. God is their great object: and they wish to be more entirely devoted to Him, and more obedient to His laws; to be more wise and holy; more useful to their fellow-creatures; more faithful in the improvement of their talents; more prepared for the unchanging world to which they look. Their life is not a fancy, a dream, a rhapsody, or a piece of

mysticism. Their object is, so to believe and act as that they may be happy for ever.

3. Religion makes us change our path. There is a broad way, and there is a narrow way. There is a course of practical proceeding which is not after the manner of this world. To become truly religious is to quit the old path of folly and vanity, and to enter into the way of wisdom and righteousness ;—that way in which patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and holy men have walked ; in which Christ himself walked when He was upon the earth. Here, then, religion is only a change. In one of the two paths all men are walking : and you cannot refrain, I think, from instantaneously deciding which of them you ought to select.

4. Religion, I would observe, implies a peculiar moral or spiritual taste. The man of the world has a taste for worldly objects, pursuits, and pleasures. He relishes them. They are most agreeable to him. They charm his eyes, and delight his senses, and satisfy his desires. They cause his feelings to be sometimes worked up even to enthusiastic rapture.—The good man has no taste for vain things—no delight in them. Objects that are not good in his estimation cannot excite his feelings or win his regard. But has he no taste ? Ask him what he sees in every flower of the field ; in the varied scenery of creation ; in the accomplished works of genius and of art. Ask him what he sees and feels in truth ; in rectitude ;

in benevolence; in justice. At the glance of these things, even at the very mention of them, his soul is stirred within him—it is alive, and feels delight and joy. He has a taste for what is good and great; for what is pure and splendid: but he has no taste for mere tinsel and vanity. Religion refines the taste: and it is in a taste for spiritual things, and in the relish of them, that the power of religion is shown in a conspicuous manner. But it must suffice to have touched here upon the subject: I only maintain, that religion is not a destruction, but a change, of taste.

5. Religion involves a change of companions and pleasures. The men of the world love the men of the world: the followers of Christ love the followers of Christ. The men of the world have their pleasures. The sensualist, the covetous, the gay, the intellectual, the imaginative or sickly sentimentalist—all have their delights. Is the good man deprived of all pleasure and delight, because he is a good man? No: enjoying the world as the world, he has far more pleasure in the moderate use he makes of lawful things, than the men of the earth have in all their inordinate proceedings. But his chief pleasures are those of the soul; which spring from pious views, principles, and affections. He has the pleasures of memory, of reflection, of hope, of imagination. He cannot select his companions and his pleasures from the

world: but he is not on that account without companions and pleasures.

6. Religion, I once more observe, involves a change of ends. "I must gain that person's favour—I must realize so much property—I must execute this design"—thus speaks the man of the world. But what does the true Christian say? "I must obtain God's favour through Christ, and do His will, and be happy with Him for ever." He seeks for glory, honour, and immortality in the way of well-doing. God, his own soul, and eternity—to these he subordinates all things. He has high and noble ends—the salvation of his soul; blessedness through eternal ages.

You see, without my advancing any thing more, that religion is not, as many seem to think, a privation, or a mere renunciation; but it is, as I said, a change, a substitution;—a substitution too of such a nature, that it replaces evil by good, shadow by substance, what is transitory by what is permanent.

It is true that religion calls us to renunciation. Unless we abandon all that is vain, sinful, and contrary to the will of God; what is an obstacle to our spiritual welfare; the right hand, the right eye, the dearest object when inconsistent with Christian integrity; we cannot be true disciples of Christ. Here is the task, the sacrifice—to some persons a very hard one—yet the task must be

performed; the sacrifice must be made. But we cannot rest satisfied with a partial statement: we, therefore, maintain, that while religion calls us to the renunciation of one world, to speak so, it introduces us into a new world; it furnishes us with new objects; it inspires us with a new taste; and it directs our faculties in the legitimate use of their energies. He who was blind, now sees. He who was dead, is now alive. He who thought that there was nothing worthy of regard within the vast range of the universe but a visible and palpable materialism, finds that he is a spiritual being in a spiritual world, and that there are such things as spiritual objects, pursuits, and pleasures. He sees and feels the grandeur and solemnity that belong to existence. He no longer creeps and grovels on the surface of a miry and a misty world, but consciously experiences the moral workings of the soul, looks forth into immensity, and rises into a purer atmosphere. A soul that is to live for ever, that is to be glorious and happy, or degraded and miserable, beyond our powers of conception at present—of this he thinks, and for this he strives to live, according to the gospel of Christ.

The world into which religion introduces its disciples is always contemplated with increasing satisfaction. This cannot be said of the world in which the inconsiderate live. They themselves, in moments of calm reflection, admit that all is

vanity and vexation of spirit: The real Christian may complain of the imperfection of his piety; but so far as he is pious, he is satisfied and happy. The more largely and deeply he is enabled to enter into the doctrines of the gospel, imbibes its spirit, obeys its laws, becomes refined in his spiritual taste, and has his affections set on unseen things, the more satisfied, serene, and happy does he feel in himself, as he meditates on life, on death, and on the disclosures of eternity.

Your judgments may be convinced, while your hearts remain unaffected. Here is the deceitfulness of sin. A thousand vain thoughts may rush into your minds; and the great and good cause which you are compelled to approve, may still be neglected and opposed. You may exclaim—“What! relinquish that which is familiar—choose a new world—fix upon new objects—seek a new taste—walk in a new path—propose to ourselves new ends! How violent an effort! How great a transition! Impracticable—impossible!” Stop, my young friends—this relinquishment, choice, effort, transition must be made, or you will ruin your immortal souls: and remember also, that “with God all things are possible.”

#### THE COLLECT.

“O God, who declarest Thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that

we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Blessed and Gracious God, when I make religion and the world the subjects of consideration, how can I hesitate in choosing that good part which shall never be taken from me! The more I think of the world, the more clearly do I discover its emptiness: but the more I think of religion, the more convincingly do I see the excellence and blessedness which belong to it. Let me no longer attend to my foolish heart, or to careless men, but humbly and thankfully listen to the instructions of truth and wisdom. Thou, O Lord, knowest my sinfulness and weakness, and how I lean to the world in opposition to my knowledge and judgment. Be merciful to me, I beseech Thee, and so enrich me with Thy heavenly grace, that I may not only form just conclusions and cherish right feelings, but also may act in agreement with them. Help me to renounce what Thy holy word calls me to renounce, and heartily to engage in Thy service. Since my thoughts and desires are not naturally fixed on spiritual things, but upon objects and pleasures which keep me far from them, O manifest to my inmost soul the folly of that choice which I have hitherto made, by



showing me the infinite superiority of the objects, pursuits, and pleasures which religion proposes to man. May I, through Thy grace, make the right choice, and henceforth live in agreement with it, so confessing Christ before men, by the soundness of my faith, and the purity of my life, that He may confess me in the last day. Grant this, O Lord, for the alone sake of the same Jesus Christ our blessed Redeemer and Advocate. Amen.

## GOD OUR HAPPINESS.

"There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,  
Omnifick. His most holy Name is Love.  
Truth of subliming import! with the which  
Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,  
He from his small particular orbit flies  
With blest outstarting! From Himself he flies,  
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze  
Views all creation; and he loves it all,  
And blesses it, and calls it very good!  
This is indeed to dwell with the most High!"  
*S. T. Coleridge.*

"Every religion is false, which, as to faith, does not worship one God, as the Author of all things; and which, as to practice, does not love one God, as the Lord of all things."—*Pascal.*

HAPPINESS is a word that is frequently on the lips of most men. Our first desire is to be happy. This is our object in all our plans and pursuits. But yet, Is it not a fact, that only few are happy? Is it not evident that men in general mistake certain agreeable feelings and gay fancies for happiness? They are happy. Why? Because they win their objects, execute their plans, succeed in business, enjoy amusement, are animated by

company, and, in short, gratify their peculiar tastes ?

Supposing that happiness consists in a certain frame of mind and heart which implies satisfaction and delight, how will the case stand ? The man of the world is happy when he increases his wealth. The sensualist, the man of gaiety, the votary of ambition, are happy when they possess their beloved objects. The man of intellect is happy when he successfully pursues his speculations : the poet, when he can paint the dreams of his imagination in glowing colours : the sensitive person, when he muses and weeps over the tales of fiction : the indolent, when he reposes without interruption on the couch of sloth.

Let us admit that these persons have a certain sort of happiness ; yet is it not possible for them to be really unhappy beings ? This is no enigma. If a man be truly happy, he must be so, not merely as a prosperous man in the world, not merely as gratifying his senses, his ambition, his intellect, his fancy, or his sensitive feelings, but as a spiritual, immortal, and accountable being : he must be happy in his soul ; happy as the creature of God ; happy in God.

Wealth, pleasure, intellect, fancy, and so forth, impart a certain description of delight : but it does not follow, that this delight is happiness. A man, to be truly happy, must, as I have just observed, be happy in his soul : and then I hope you will

admit, that an immortal soul cannot derive its happiness from mortal things; from any thing but the immortal God. Now all that is visible and tangible only belongs to the mortal or material man. God is the only adequate object for his immortal soul. The eye, the ear, the taste, the touch may be satisfied with material objects. The intellect and the imagination may dwell on material or immaterial things; on what is seen and unseen, real or possible. But the soul turns from created things and from fancied forms: it cannot rest in any of them: it has no adequate object but God; no true happiness but from and in Him. God is our happiness; and if we live strangers to Him, we may fill our cups at a thousand springs, but we do not fill them at the only Fountain of bliss.

This is the conviction which I wish to be fixed in your minds. As the mere creatures of this world, you may be happy from this world's objects. Nay more, you may fancy yourselves to be truly happy—especially in the morning of your days, when you can smile on all things, and when all things smile on you. Animated in your feelings, bright in fancy, eager in pursuit, sanguine in hope, attending to little with close reflection, far more the creatures of the heart than of the mind, you may enrol yourselves in the number of happy beings:—and most undoubtedly you may be happy, according to the common ideas of happiness.

But recollect, that you are only viewing a part of your nature. You are spiritual, immortal, and responsible creatures: Your true happiness essentially consists in the happiness of the noblest part of man—the soul. But the happiness of the soul does not, and cannot, flow from created things—it flows from the Creator, and from Him only. When, therefore, you are happy in and from God, then, and only then, you are truly happy.

A child is amused with his gewgaws, sports, and games: but surely, to be a happy child he must enjoy the love of his parents. If they be displeased with him, or if he cherish wrong thoughts and feelings respecting them, you would not account him a happy child, merely because you saw him laughing over his play, and quite delighted with his baubles. Gay and alert he may be—but happy he cannot be, until there be a restoration of mutual love between his parents and him, and all the endearing intercourse which such love cannot fail to produce. In like manner, then, a man may be pleased and delighted, be gay and alert, may jest and laugh, and may account himself happy, in his inconsiderateness, while his worldly objects and delights are around him, and while his worldly pursuits engross his time and his faculties. But he forgets God: there is no love, no union, no intercourse, between God and him. The fact is, he dislikes God, and God is displeased with him. I maintain, therefore, that he cannot be really happy

until there is reconciliation, friendship, union, and communion between God and his immortal soul.

This statement addresses itself so clearly to your reason, that you have no inclination to dispute it. You reflect on your nature and circumstances, and readily admit that God is the happiness of man : and you may be prepared to repeat the words of a poet ;

“ Father of light and life, Thou Good Supreme !

O teach me what is good ! teach me Thyself !

Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,

From every low pursuit ; and feed my soul

With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure ;

Sacred, substantial, never fading bliss !”

But now another view of the subject is to be taken. If deism were the true religion, I have no hesitation in admitting, that man is naturally a religious being. To acknowledge the existence of an Infinite Spirit, and to speak in high terms of his majesty and goodness, are certainly not ungenial to our common reason. As long as we are only called upon to contemplate and acknowledge the existence of a Being of infinite grandeur and perfection, and are allowed to live, in a great measure, as we please, concluding that this glorious Being is satisfied with any homage that we may render to Him, and will be indulgent to the faults and frailties of His feeble creatures, I know of nothing in man's constitution that rises up against such sentiments. But when we hear that this

glorious. Being is holy and just; when we are taught His claims and demands; when we find that we owe complete subjection to His righteous authority; when we learn that the renunciation of error, the world, and sin, that the acceptance of truth, mercy, and grace, that the regulation of our hearts and lives by holy laws, are essential to our welfare; then we discover the perverseness and rebellion of human nature. Man does not dislike or oppose religion: but he dislikes and opposes the true religion.—Consider now the following plain observations on this subject.

1. God is our happiness. I need not enlarge here. God is perfection; and all perfection proceeds from Him. The soul, in order to be happy, must have perfection; that is, must have communicated influence from God. The more we are like Him, the more perfect and happy we are: but this likeness results from His grace working in the soul. While we are without Him, and far from Him, we cannot be happy.

“Thou art the source and centre of all minds,  
 Their only point of rest, Eternal Word!  
 From Thee departing, they are lost, and rove  
 At random, without honour, hope, or peace.”

2. God, in order to be our happiness, must be known as He is revealed to us. When we speak of God in reference to our salvation, we do not regard the metaphysical abstractions of the sage,

or the splendid imaginations of the poet: our business is with the Jehovah of the Scriptures of truth. Creation proclaims the power and godhead of its Maker: but of His justice, holiness, mercy, love, and truth it gives no information adequate to our wants. Here Revelation comes to our relief: and to be happy in God, we must know and acknowledge Him as He is revealed to us.

3. God, to be our happiness, must be known in spirit and in truth. Mechanical and formal services cannot make us really happy in our souls: and equally unavailing to this end are vague notions and brilliant fancies. If the cherished frame of the soul be not right, if its settled principles and affections be not sound and pure, the individual cannot be happy in God. He is a Spirit: Religion is substantially a spiritual matter; and unless we treat it as such, we cannot derive much benefit from it.

4. God, to be our happiness, must communicate Himself to our souls. God, as an object of contemplation, about which we are to have certain notions, and God as a Being of communication, imparting Himself to his creatures—these, I say, are very distinct things. As to the former, we are only intelligent creatures exercising our mental powers: but as to the latter, we are recipients of spiritual blessings: we are made “partakers of the divine nature:” “out of His fulness have we all received.” Mere contemplation, however large,



splendid, or vivid, does not radically remove any imperfection of our nature, or correct any of its disorders. Of our ascended Lord it is said, that "He hath received gifts for men:" and it is by the reception of these gifts, pardon, divine favour, grace, and peace, that the soul is happy. Here is Christian blessedness.

5. God, to be our happiness, must be practically regarded as our chief good. We must give up our whole selves to Him. Every idol must be expelled from the heart. Every evil way must be renounced. He must be our object—the sole object of the undivided man. There must be no reserve, no hypocrisy, no inconsistency. We must live to Him spiritually, practically, truly, all our days. He is to be habitually in our thoughts; the object of our adoring veneration, of our grateful love, of our entire confidence. In short, true piety is a state of soul, a frame of soul, a habit of soul, a walk, a perseverance in well doing. It is derived from God, and it is leading us to the greater enjoyment of Him here, and to the perfect enjoyment of Him hereafter.

What I have said amounts to this; God is our only true happiness: but that He may be such to us, far more is necessary than a vague knowledge and formal acknowledgment of Him. There must be a true knowledge of Him according to the Gospel; a union with Him; a spiritual and practical submission to Him, to His counsels and laws, un-

reservedly and universally. There must be amity and communion between Him and the soul. The question, therefore, is—Will you thus regard God, and seek for happiness in Him and in His service; or will you cleave to the world, and be satisfied with its muddy, faithless, and transient streams? In other words, Will you become, by divine grace, the children and servants of God, and be blessed here and for ever; or will you be the slaves of sin, and spend your days in vexation and disappointment, and go down at last to the chambers of eternal woe? Consider well the question: and I trust you will be urged to seek strength from above, in order that you may choose the good part.

## THE COLLECT.

“O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man’s understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

Eternal, Infinite, and Ever-blessed Jehovah, Thou hast declared Thy Name to man. Thou art “the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear

the guilty." Thou art Perfection : Thou art light, and Thou art love : and Thou only canst make Thy creatures truly happy. The perishing world may gratify our mortal senses : but Thou only canst satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. If the whole world were mine, yet if I were destitute of Thee, I should only grasp trifles, shadows, and emptiness. How then can I think of choosing the world for my portion ! O deliver me from all delusion, and powerfully impress upon my heart the undeniable truth, that if I have Thee I have happiness, and that if I have not Thee, I am a miserable creature, even in the brightest hours of life. Enable me, O Lord, to renounce the world, with all its pomps, pleasures, and vanity ; and to seek my happiness in Thee, in Thy favour and service. Thou art revealed to us in Christ Jesus. O Spirit of truth and grace, enlighten my mind, and purify my heart ; and grant that I may experience, through Thy power, the good work of religion in my soul ; that I may be happy in God while I continue in this world, and happy with Him for ever in the world to come. Look, O Lord, in mercy upon Thy imploring creature : reveal Thyself to my soul, according to the gospel of Thy Son : and do more for me than I can express, or even conceive, according to Thy mercy in Jesus Christ ; to whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit be everlasting praise. Amen.

## HUMAN CORRUPTION.

" . . . . . Spells that film the eye of Faith,  
Hiding the present God ; whose presence lost,  
The moral world's cohesion, we become  
An anarchy of Spirits ! Toy-bewitched,  
Made blind by lusts, disherited of soul,  
No common centre Man, no common sire  
Knoweth."—*S. T. Coleridge.*

" There is so much falseness and iniquity in man's heart, that it defiles all the members : it makes the eyes lustful, and the tongue slanderous ; it fills the head with mischief, and the feet with blood, and the hands with injury, and the present condition of man with folly, and makes his future state apt to inherit eternal misery."—*Bp. Jer. Taylor.*

THE topic of this chapter may at first sight appear to you as one that is very repulsive : but I would intreat you to exercise becoming candour and seriousness in the examination of it. The period will come when every one shall know himself : and surely it is far better for us to know ourselves when such knowledge may be useful, than to obtain it when it will be of no avail. True self-knowledge is a thing that is most important, and altogether invaluable. Without this we know nothing aright. A wise and good man is always becoming more fully acquainted with

himself. Self is, to speak so, a large volume ; and it has many a page in it of intricate lore : but if it be properly studied, it is always studied with large advantage : and it is only in proportion as we understand it that we can enter into the doctrines and spirit of the gospel of Christ.

Be not startled, my young readers, at the plain and explicit declaration, that to know ourselves, as to salvation, is to know our sinfulness. You may think that you know yourselves, because you have read some of those volumes which treat of the nature and faculties of man. But I am not writing about mental science, but about religion : and in the view of this subject I maintain, that we do not know ourselves, because we can fluently speak about our various powers or endowments as intelligent creatures ; and that we know ourselves only when we have a right apprehension of our state and character in relation to a holy and righteous God.

Perhaps your friends, and relatives, and the world, regard you as being the most lovely, and charming, and innocent, and excellent beings that ever breathed the air. In their estimation, you want nothing but a little experience to inform your judgments, or to cool your ardour, or to inspire you with confidence. They are delighted with your warmth, freedom, simplicity, frankness, and generosity. They form high expectations of you : they are frequent and abundant in their eulogies of your virtue and amiableness.

And how do you regard yourselves? Perhaps with entire complacency. You have been guilty of no gross sin; you have not formed any vicious habit; your anger has been only a passing cloud; your pursuits are very harmless; and you feel a glow of satisfaction in your bosoms, because you are loved, caressed, admired, extolled, and valued by all around you. Others are pleased with you; and you are not less pleased with yourselves.

I will readily admit that you may have the virtue and amiableness which are ascribed to you. I put you in comparison with thousands of your fellow-creatures, and I admit that you excel them. But I think of the Holy God whose you are, of the law which is our rule of duty, of the spirit of the gospel with which you ought to be pervaded; and then I am compelled to say that you are sinful creatures; and I call upon you to examine yourselves, not to see your virtues and to cherish self-complacency, but to see your sinfulness and to cherish an humble frame of mind.

I can see as clearly as others, and admire as warmly as others, your pleasing and virtuous qualities. But I contemplate you as immortal beings, as spiritual agents, as persons who are inheritors of an eternal existence in happiness or in misery. I see in you a part of the sinful human family.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God; but he is now a sinful, corrupt, disordered

creature. The following lines contain more than poetry : they contain truth.

. . . . . " Not at rest or ease of mind,  
 They sat them down to weep ; nor only tears  
 Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within,  
 Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,  
 Mistrust, suspicion, discord ; and shook sore  
 Their inward state of mind, calm region once  
 And full of peace, now tost and turbulent ;  
 For Understanding ruled not, and the Will  
 Heard not her lore ; both in subjection now  
 To sensual Appetite, who from beneath  
 Usurping over sovereign Reason claimed  
 Superior sway."

Our intellect is clouded ; our judgment is per-verse ; our will is depraved ; our conscience is stupified or erroneous ; our affections are worldly or carnal ; our fancy is gay and trifling ; our memory is faithless or foolish ; our taste is low and vitiated. Sin has disordered all our faculties. The moral machinery is in confusion.

But in the midst of this moral ruin we are apt to mistake our rags for robes, the wand of folly for the sceptre of wisdom, and our flippant boasting of power and virtue for the real possession of true moral majesty and grandeur. We plant a few flowers in a wilderness, and we think that we walk in a paradise. Having the decorations of fashion, and the accomplishments of elegance, and the ingenious arts of courtesy and politeness, we conceal even from ourselves the moral defilement that be-

longs to our nature. Our sinfulness is thrown into the shade: nothing meets the eye but the exterior fascinations. We have no time, no inclination, to look within, and to study the nature of principles and the movements of affections. We have nothing to do with sin; at least we have nothing to fear from its consequences. Such is the fair and fatal illusion which prevails among, it is to be feared, myriads of the young and of the aged.

But, my young friends, a wise person makes a personal application of truth. He does not say, "We are sinners all:" but he says, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is here, then, that I would call upon you to consider your own case, each individually for himself. This may be a humiliating, or even painful task: but it is one that is essential to your welfare.

You are not stained with gross sin. You attend on the ordinances of religion. You do not plunge with greedy avidity into the pleasures of the world. You are dutiful to your parents. You are kind to the poor. Let this be the case: and still it is true, that you are sinful creatures in the eye of the Holy God.—But let me here propose a few questions.

Do you fear and love God, and find your supreme delight in Him? He is awful, and is to be feared. He is good, and is to be loved. He is Perfection, and the Fountain of happiness, and is to be delighted in. The soul of man ought to be filled with Him; ought habitually to cherish



solemn thoughts and happy feelings respecting Him. You acknowledge His existence, and you have no objection to hear about Him. But do you live "as seeing Him who is Invisible"—do you know Him, and feel rightly disposed towards Him? You acknowledge that this is not the case. God is not the object whom you habitually regard, and to whom you live. You do not turn to Him, and rest on Him, as the needle turns to the pole, and rests there. But is not this a clear proof of moral disorder—of sinfulness?

Do you love and delight in the Scriptures, and in religious duties? You know what it is to love and delight in poems and tales of fiction, in company and amusement. But do you love the book of God above all books, and delight in the public and private worship of God? Is not reading the Scriptures a task, a duty, a heavy work? It is customary to go to Church. You practise private prayer: but are you not glad when the duty is performed? Religion is a something to you; but yet you do not know what to make of it: you feel no delight in it; you derive no efficacy from it, you have no taste for it. But is not this a proof of moral disorder—of sinfulness?

Do you love and delight in the Lord Jesus Christ—God in our nature? The Bible is peculiarly the revelation of a Saviour. There you have His history. You learn who He is, and what He did. You hear His words. You be-

hold His sufferings and death, His resurrection and ascension. You are made acquainted with the characters and offices which He now sustains. He is entitled to our highest love. We are to "honour Him as we honour the Father." Do you know Him, rejoice in Him, and follow Him? Your consciences testify that you do not regard the glorious and gracious Emmanuel as you ought. Is not this a proof of inward moral disorder—of sinfulness?

Do you make the law of God the rule of your conduct, and delight in that law? You speak highly perhaps of practical religion: most persons extol obedience. But what is Christian Obedience? It is conformity to the law of God. He who makes that law his rule of action will not be led and governed by the maxims and examples of the world; nor by the dictates of his own mind, or the devices of his own heart. He studies, loves, obeys, and delights in the law of his God. Is this your case? Do you not rather account the law of God too strict, too rigid, too unsparing? Is not this a proof of moral disorder—of sinfulness?

Do you find that your souls, in their thoughts, feelings, and tastes, delight in spiritual things? Man is known by his tastes. In what do you find the greatest delight, the greatest relish? You may have an exquisite taste for the magnificent in nature, or for the excellent in art. It is a source of great and of pure pleasure to have this accom-

plishment. But there is such a thing as a spiritual or moral taste : and the soul which possesses it is opposed to all moral deformity, and rejoices in all moral beauty and perfection. If the soul have not a fine and exquisite taste for divine and spiritual things, for 'uncreated, unchanging, and eternal excellence, so as to find its congenial element in goodness, is it not an undeniable proof that it labours under a moral disorder—that it is a sinful being ?

Are you conscious that you desire and strive to please God, to glorify Him, to live for heaven—for eternity ? God has made you what you are—given you what you have—allotted to you your places in society : but are you mindful of your talents, of your duties, of the will and design of your Creator ? Are you living to the glory of God, the good of man, and for your own salvation ? If you are not living thus, you have the clearest proof that the machinery is out of order, that there is a principle of evil within which deranges the whole. Not to live to God and eternity with a conscious decision of the soul, is a demonstration that, whatever we may think of ourselves, we are corrupt and depraved creatures.

I would request you to consider these plain questions : and if you rightly meditate upon them, you will, by divine grace, be led to see the real character of man. Whatever be your virtue and amiableness, in whatever estimation you may be

held among men, you are in the sight of the Holy God sinful creatures—yet unfit for His presence—unfit for heaven. You are exempt from gross sin; you are adorned with many excellencies; but there is disorder within—a moral leprosy which man cannot cure. Hence the soul must undergo a change before it can be truly happy—before it is fit for the celestial dwellings. Fear not, my young friends, to entertain this thought—to cherish this conviction. It is one of those that lies at the threshold of piety. Religion is only a notion, a fancy, a mechanism, until internal and external sin is known and felt: and he who rightly sees and feels his sinfulness of heart and life, will seek, and, through the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, he will find salvation for his soul.

## THE COLLECT.

“Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

Holy and Blessed God, I acknowledge that I am a sinful creature. If I have been kept from

acts of gross sin, I ascribe this to Thy great goodness: but yet I am the sinful offspring of a sinful ancestor. My nature is defiled; I have failed in doing my duty; and I have in numberless instances transgressed Thy holy and righteous laws. If I look to my mind and heart, what can I account them but regions of darkness, folly, and vanity! I may be admired by those around me, and I may admire myself: but when I think of Thee, who art the Holy One, I can only say, Have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner: Mercifully deliver me, I beseech Thee, from all delusion, and cause me to know by the light of Thy truth, and to feel by the power of Thy grace, what I am in myself, and before Thee. How have I hitherto trifled! How have I hitherto deceived myself! I have regarded myself as one who is good and excellent, and who has need of nothing. But I bless Thee for being called to consideration, and to the serious examination of myself. O deliver me from ignorance and error, from hardness and stupidity and death. Give me, O Lord, the sound mind and the contrite heart: and instead of trifling any longer, may I lay serious things to heart—humble myself before Thee, and repent in dust and ashes. Give me a heart to pray, and graciously hear and answer my petitions. Thus, O Lord, be gracious unto me, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

## REDEMPTION.

" The law of God exact He shall fulfil  
Both by obedience and by love, though love  
Alone fulfil the law ; thy punishment  
He shall endure, by coming in the flesh  
To a reproachful life and cursed death ;  
Proclaiming life to all who shall believe  
In his redemption ; and that his obedience,  
Imputed, becomes theirs by faith ; his merits  
To save them, not their own, though legal, works."

*Milton.*

" The amiable moralist, the zealous servant of the law, the just and the benevolent, the monarch on the throne and the captive in the dungeon, the wise and the unlearned, the Pharisee and the multitude, the scribe and the wayfaring man, must eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink his blood, or they have no life in them. Be the spiritual case of every individual what it may, Christ crucified fully and entirely meets it."—*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

If I could assure you that you are in the favour of God, and that there is an intimate and indissoluble amity between Him and your souls, and that you will certainly obtain heaven, on the ground of your Christian privileges, and of your amiable virtues and prompt discharge of your social duties,

I might advance what would be very gratifying to you : but you are aware, from my preceding statements, that I am compelled to set before you a very different sort of doctrine. Among the all-important topics of religion, the corruption of man, redemption through Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, demand the most serious consideration that can be given them. I do not aim to put subjects before you with systematical formality. Whatever may be our distinctions and refinements, when we enter into particulars, the great and general truths on which we build are these—that we are lost and depraved creatures—that the Son of God is the only Redeemer—and that the Holy Spirit is the only Sanctifier.

Redemption is grounded on our sinfulness, and on God's holiness and justice, love and mercy. It is, if I may speak so, love and mercy delivering man from sin in accordance with holiness and justice. If we were not sinners, corrupt and enslaved, offending and guilty, we should need no Redeemer. But we are sinful creatures in our nature, and transgressing creatures in our conduct : and hence we are unlike God, who is the Holy One ; and we are under condemnation before Him as the righteous Governor of the world. What we need, therefore, is, pardon, justification, and the renewal of our nature. We need mercy, to forgive us : we need grace, to adorn our souls with holiness. Let man be pardoned ; and this can only be done by such

means as God in His wisdom and goodness shall appoint: and let man be renewed after the image of God, so that he shall please Him in his thoughts, principles, affections, and conduct:—and then it is manifest that he is in a new state, and has a new nature. He stands before us in the blessed condition and attitude of a redeemed being—of a real partaker of redemption.

The great object of the Bible is to reveal to us a Redeemer—God in Christ; Him by whose work, by whose obedience unto death, by whose atoning sacrifice, and by whose Spirit, we may be pardoned and justified in a manner worthy of the just God, and may be made truly holy in the frame of our souls; in our hearts and lives. From this Saviour we are called Christians: but surely the great point is, not to bear that august title (“the highest style of man”) in vain, but so to know Christ, as to be of the number of those who are “washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The true doctrine indisputably is, that we have salvation in Christ only. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” He “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Salvation is His work for us, and the work of His Spirit in us. If we be justified, it is only “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” If we be pardoned, it is in Him “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness



of sins." If we be renewed, it is through His Spirit working and dwelling within us. If we enjoy the favour of God here, and shall be advanced to His glorious presence hereafter, it proceeds from the redeeming work of Christ. Surely then we are under the highest obligations to Him as "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," and He ought to have a large place in our regard.

But you cannot be unacquainted with this fact—that Christians in general have a strong aversion to hear much in conversation of Christ and of Him crucified. We may speak of God; of some of His adorable perfections, of His providence, and of His works; and we shall be heard perhaps with delight and admiration. We may indeed speak of Christ; and provided we confine our remarks to His example and morals, we may escape censure, or even win praise. But the author of the sermon on the mount, is also the author of the valedictory discourse to the apostles. The sermon on the mount is not the whole of the Gospel. The exhibiting of a holy Example is very far from being all that Christ has done for us. If, however, we speak of the person, of the sacrifice, of the righteousness, of the love, of the spiritual demands of the Saviour, we are not heard with satisfaction. Our hearers are uncomfortable: they are not at home: there is no chord in their hearts that vibrates in unison with our statements. They may confess that what

we say is good and true; but they do not enter into it; they have a secret aversion to it; and they are eager for the arrival of the moment when the topic shall be relinquished. Perhaps some of you, my young readers, are not strangers to that frame of spirit to which I have here adverted.

There is naturally in the heart of man a strong aversion to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. For instance, the doctrine of Justification is thus stated by our Church: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings." Aversion to this doctrine has caused the language in which it is here expressed, to be tortured in almost every possible manner, in order to make it convey any thing but its own plain, obvious, and scriptural sentiment.

This aversion obviously springs from the contrariety that exists between the gospel and corrupt human nature. We are proud, self-sufficient, full of self-complacency and self-admiration. But the gospel calls us to humility, self-debasement, and self-renunciation,—to the unfeigned and complete humiliation of ourselves before God as wretched creatures, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—as insolvent debtors, as guilty criminals, as lost and perishing beings. It calls us to accept all the blessings of redemption as the free gifts of God. But God's pure bounty does not please man's unhumiliated spirit. He deems the acceptance of bless-

ings as pure gifts, to imply a denial of his own wisdom, power, and virtue, and to be a degradation of himself.

Perhaps, my young readers, you may think, because your lives are orderly and your characters pleasing, that you enjoy the divine favour, and that you need not receive any thing more from, or through Christ, than what you presume you have already received from Him. If this be the case, allow me to say with tenderness, but with great plainness of speech—you stand at present on awful ground as to God and eternity.—But I would here advance a few remarks.

First, If you would be true Christians, you must know God—not merely as being the Creator and Upholder of all things; not merely as the Being in whom you live, and move, and are; not merely as the Benefactor, who, in His providence, pours His benefits upon you;—but you must know Him as the Holy God, to whom all iniquity is an abomination; as the righteous Governor and Judge, who will not acquit the wicked who die in their sins. God is holy, righteous, a consuming fire. To remember His love and mercy, but to forget His holiness and justice, is not to remember aright Him with whom we have to do. “A God all mercy is a God unjust.”

Secondly, If you would be true Christians, you must know yourselves. To know yourselves is to know, that you are corrupt, offending and guilty

creatures. Compare yourselves, as to your heart and conduct, with the law of God, and then, notwithstanding your virtue and amiableness, you will find that your transgressions are numberless. You have done what you ought not to have done: you have left undone what you ought to have done: in a word, you have never spent a day, or even an hour, without offence, either by transgression or defect. My sins are before me—is the language of one who knows himself, and who rightly de- means himself before God.

Thirdly, If you would be true Christians, you must know Christ. Your views of Him will be very defective, unless you are acquainted with the holiness and justice of God, and with the depravity and lost state of man. The momentous question is, How can man be just before God, so as to enjoy His favour here, and eternal happiness hereafter? How can sinful and guilty man rise up from his ruined state, and stand before God a pardoned, righteous, holy creature—an inheritor of blessedness? Will any one say that he can satisfy God, remove the various evils that belong to himself as a sinner, and secure heaven by wisdom, power, and expedients of his own? Christ is the only Saviour. He, by His obedience even unto death, has done what man could not do, and procured those blessings for him which he could obtain by no other means. Here it is that we learn Christ—we see Him to be the Saviour of lost sinners. He has

offered Himself, the great atoning sacrifice for sin—He is the author of reconciliation—the Mediator between God and man, the fountain of all spiritual blessings.

Fourthly, If you would be true Christians, you must receive Christ. There must be an entire renunciation of ourselves, a complete submission of the soul to Christ, a spiritual reception of Him—to be saved and to be ruled by Him. God is holy and just: man is depraved and guilty: Christ is the Redeemer; the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people; by whom all real believers, all who truly and spiritually receive Him, are justified, sanctified, instructed, governed, and preserved. Here is the simplicity of the Gospel. But mere ideas of these things are not sufficient. There must be spiritual transactions and operations. Christ is our Saviour when we receive Him, through grace, as our Saviour. "As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Thus I briefly put before you—Salvation in and through Christ—in and through Him only, fully, and freely, so that every one who will, may come and obtain the inestimable blessing. Christ died for the sins of the whole world: but He will eventually be only the Saviour of those who truly

believe in Him ; who receive Him, live by faith in Him, and live to Him in holiness and obedience.

Here I would intreat you to examine yourselves. Let each ask himself,—“ What do I know of Christ? What do I think of Him? How do I regard him? What influence has my knowledge of Him on my heart and conduct?”—You find that your views of our Saviour are superficial. You have not duly considered His redeeming work: you have not thought of becoming spiritually partakers of Him; of seeking spiritual blessings from Him, and of living to Him, according to His laws, and after His example. You know Christ as nominal Christians know Him; but not spiritually, as He is known by true believers.

I speak plainly, not to accuse you, my young readers, but to call you to the close, deep, and faithful consideration of a matter which is of infinite moment to you. Redemption is in Christ. You have heard this with “the hearing of the ear:” but you have not sought this redemption: it remains a remote and general, not a near and personal subject. Your religion, therefore, is profession, not operation; a notion, not a power. Such, methinks, you now own to be the case. Give the subject, then, the attention which it deserves: and let it be your earnest prayer, that you, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, may “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent,—which is life eternal.”

## THE COLLECT.

"O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life ; grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life ; that following the steps of Thy holy apostles and faithful servants, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life ; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Holy and Blessed God, when I meditate, as at present, on the spiritual condition of man, and on the things that belong to his eternal welfare, I am obliged to confess that I have hitherto little regarded them, and that I have lived in darkness, error, and delusion. Thou hast so loved the world, that Thou gavest Thy only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Such a gift is a proof of Thy unspeakable love ; nor is it less a proof of the lost state of man. Suffer me not, I beseech Thee, to trifle any longer with sacred things ; to be careless and indifferent about them ; or to abuse in any manner Thy mercy and goodness. Make me rightly acquainted with Thy adorable perfections ; with Thy holiness and justice, as well as with Thy love and mercy. Make me rightly acquainted with Thy righteous law, and with my own nature and condition, as a corrupt

and guilty creature. Enlightened, awakened, and convinced by Thy power, may I seek the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Grant that I may truly receive Him as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and be thus made a partaker of all the blessings of that redemption which is in Him. Remove far from me all ignorance, pride, and unbelief. Let me no longer live a stranger to Him by whose name I am called. Let it henceforth be the first desire of my soul to know Him, and to be united to Him. O that He may be manifested to me as He is not to the world; and that I may love Him, glory in Him, and follow Him. No longer let me hold views and cherish hopes which are contrary to the Gospel. No longer let me listen to the world, or lean to my own understanding. But do Thou, O gracious God, visit me with Thy mercy, and lead me to the true and saving knowledge of Christ, that I may be His both here and for evermore. Incline Thine ear to my prayer, and answer my petition, according to Thy great goodness, for the sake of the same Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord. Amen.



## SANCTIFICATION.

" . . . . . From Heaven  
He to His own a Comforter will send,  
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
His Spirit within them ; and the law of faith,  
Working through love upon their hearts shall write,  
To guide them in all truth, and also arm  
With spiritual armour, able to resist  
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts ;  
What man can do against them, not afraid,  
Though to the death."—*Milton*.

" Whose image and superscription dost thou bear ?  
God's image, by which He knows His own, is Holiness stamped upon them. God doth, as it were, strike a tally, when He sanctifies any soul : He communicates His holiness to it ; and, in that, His image and similitude : nor will He own that person, in the last day, who cannot produce this tessera, this tally, and prove himself to be God's by his conformity unto Him."—*Bp. Hopkins*.

REDEMPTION implies the twofold fact of our guilt and of our depravity ; and it is the remedy which God has graciously provided for the removal of these evils and their consequences, and for our reinstatement in true blessedness. With respect to our inherent corruption, the Holy Spirit, the only Sanctifier, is the blessed Agent to whom we are to

look for deliverance from it, and for the attainment of holiness.

If I could speak of the wisdom, ability, and virtue of man, and assure him that he could purify himself, and adorn himself with all the charms of real goodness, I might be accounted a pleasing instructor, and be heard by many persons with great delight. But what would you say, if you heard me assure a paralytic that he had strength to walk, run, and labour; that he was a healthy and powerful man; and that his disease and weakness were a mere fancy? You would say, that I spoke very absurdly. But it would be equally absurd, if I were to tell you, that you are possessors of natural inherent power, by which you can make yourselves pure in the sight of the Holy God.

While I thus deny the existence of any inherent power in man of sanctifying efficacy, I do not reduce him to the state of an inert or passive being. He has power to make himself virtuous: but natural virtue is not true holiness. He has power also to seek, to ask for, a transforming agency from above: and it is, I conceive, on his seeking this, or his neglecting to seek it, that his salvation, or his ruin depends. He is peculiarly—a creature of duty, though in himself a lost and helpless creature. In such a state has grace put him.

Sin is not a slight affection, a cutaneous disorder, but a deep and inveterate disease, pervading

the whole man ; body, soul, and spirit. Again, the fine veil of human virtue and amiableness is not true holiness : for true holiness is the result of a renovation of our whole nature by that Almighty Spirit who moved on the face of the chaotic elements at the creation, and who gave order, life, beauty, and magnificence to the world.

Nor, in speaking thus, do I degrade man. I merely state a fact. Man possesses the faculties of an intelligent and accountable being : and when I consider these, in connexion with his Christian privileges, with Baptism, Confirmation, and the Means of grace, I maintain, that they will render him awfully guilty if he do not act as such a being ought to act. But with all our faculties and privileges, we can be made holy only by the Spirit of God, from whom proceeds all that constitutes real piety in the soul. We as much need His operations to sanctify us, as we need the sacrifice of Christ to atone for our sins. Accordingly, the salvation which the Gospel reveals is, Justification by faith in a crucified Saviour, and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

But as men forget Christ, in reference to pardon and to the favour of God, so do they forget the Holy Spirit, in reference to the renewal of their souls after the image of God. "O God the Holy Ghost, have mercy upon us miserable sinners"—is a petition frequently uttered by the lips of many. I would ask Is it a petition that is deeply felt by

the soul? Does it express the earnest desire of the heart? If Christians so knew themselves, and the nature of true piety, as to pray earnestly for the new-creating energy from above, they would never think highly of themselves, or boast of their various abilities. Truly devout souls are humble souls: and humble souls never speak highly of themselves.

Man is not now what he was originally: his faculties are the same, but they are not in the same moral state. On this subject I have spoken in the eighth chapter. Suffice it, then, to say here, that the current of our thoughts and affections run in almost every channel, except the right one. We fix upon almost any object, rather than upon that which deserves our esteem and love. Let any one use but a moderate degree of faithful introspection, and he will have ample proof of this melancholy fact. Will you compare man to a temple? The temple is in ruins. Do you compare him to a plant? The plant is blighted. Do you compare him to a king? His crown has lost its bright gems, his robe is marred and torn, and his sceptre is broken. Examine your views: and how erroneous are they! Examine your thoughts and imaginations; and how full are they of vanity! Examine your affections and taste; and how earthly are these! Without adverting to any act of gross sin, you have here abundant evidence of your depravity.

Here, then, you see the need of a Sanctifier. Some amiable young persons, alive to the sinfulness of their nature, endeavour to subdue sin by fasting and by other austerities, as the primary means for effecting their object. They torment the body, but with no essential benefit to the soul. There is a Sanctifier : and no one will ever obtain true holiness until he become a partaker of His agency ; by which, in the use of appointed means, (and fasting, when rightly conducted, may be accounted one of these,) the mind is wrought upon, so as to understand divine things, and the heart is wrought upon, so as to love and delight in them. By this agency we draw near to God through Christ Jesus ; we pray in a proper manner ; we mortify the deeds of the body ; and we put on the new man. By the Holy Spirit the love of God is shed abroad in the heart ; by Him we are purified, strengthened, comforted, and built up in spiritual and practical piety. In short, the whole work of our salvation as a sanctifying operation, is the work of the Holy Spirit. The first good thought that is formed in the mind, the first right feeling that springs up in the heart, the tender anxiety that belongs to repentance, the faith that leads the soul to Christ, the love that glows, and the hope that aspires after heaven—every thing in real piety, from the first breathing of heart-felt prayer to the last expression of resignation and peace uttered by the dying believer, proceeds from the

agency of the almighty and gracious Sanctifier.— Thus I would lead you to see your own poverty and misery, and also the fulness of spiritual blessings revealed and offered to us in the gospel. Here I would advance a few remarks.

1. A due sense of our sinfulness lies at the foundation of true spiritual piety. No one will seek the agency of the great Sanctifier, who does not see and feel his need of it. "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing:"—while such language describes our frame of mind, and we know not, and feel not, "that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," we shall not think of the "tried gold, and of the white raiment, and of the eye-salve" which the gospel offers to us. Man must have some right apprehension of his misery before he can become an humble mendicant at the door of Mercy.

2. It is the duty of every one to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit. He is promised in answer to prayer. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Scripture and experience teach us our inability to purify ourselves: but we also know that God has made a provision for our purification, and that we shall find it to be effectual if we seek it in humble devotion. If we refuse to seek the divine bounty, we are the de-

stroyers of our own souls. We are bound to believe in the promised Spirit; to accept of, and to imbibe His influence; and as it is our duty to pray, so it is our duty to pray, in an especial manner, that He may be granted to us, and that we may be partakers of all his saving operations.

3. Of the operations of the Holy Spirit we cannot speak distinctly; but whatever variety characterize them, their general result is the same in all cases. "Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" are wrought in the soul; sin and folly are forsaken; the happy individual knows the mercy and power of the gospel; his life is holy and useful. Acting in the light of God's word, and on the principles of the new creation, he opposes sin, keeps the commandments of Christ, improves his talents; and lives as one who is to give an account of himself to God—as one who is looking for an inheritance in a brighter and better world.

4. We ought to beware of resisting, grieving, and quenching the Holy Spirit. If in some cases He take the fortress of the heart by storm, and make Himself possessor of it by a might that sets at nought every hostile influence, yet this is not the common mode of His agency. He comes with a mildness almost imperceptible, touches the conscience and the feelings, softly knocks at the door—but if He be slighted, He withdraws. Pray for His influence: and whatever good thoughts, feel-

ings, and resolves are excited and formed within you, be careful to cherish them; and pray for more grace, that they may remain with you, and prevail in you, and that your hearts may be made the dwelling-place of Him who is the Lord and Giver of life. Open your souls, if I may speak so, at His approach: welcome Him; entertain Him: O trifle not with one who, if slighted, if provoked, may never renew His visits, but leave you in darkness, sin, and death.

Thus, my young readers, I have put before you a most important subject: and be assured of this—If you would be blessed in the kingdom of glory above, you must be holy in the kingdom of grace upon earth. Heaven is a world or state of perfect holiness, into which nothing shall enter that defileth. Redemption is both the remission of sin, and purification from sin: the latter is the great work of the gracious Sanctifier. You will always find inherent evil, melancholy imperfection, in yourselves: yet without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Look, then, unto Jesus: and pray for those mighty influences from above, that you may be always acquiring a greater degree of likeness to Him who is the Holy One, and with whom all holy souls shall for ever dwell in perfect light and blessedness.

## THE COLLECT.

“O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; Mercifully grant, that



Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts ; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O Holy and Gracious God, great has been my folly, that, through the deceitfulness of sin, I have not seriously attended to the salvation of my immortal soul. How little have I thought in a serious manner of my own sinfulness, of the all-sufficient Redeemer, and of the almighty Sanctifier ! I have vainly satisfied myself with high notions of my own wisdom and ability, of my prudence, virtue, and amiableness, as if by these I could make myself worthy of Thy favour, and secure eternal happiness. I now see in part my error and delusion ; and I pray that, through Thy grace, I may see them more clearly, and feel them more strongly. Man was created in Thy likeness ; but he is now a sinful creature. I am corrupt, depraved, disordered in all my faculties : and I may well exclaim with sorrow of heart, Unclean, Unclean ! Nor can I purify myself : but in the Holy Spirit I see one who is able to teach the dark mind, subdue pride, correct perverseness, make pure the affections, and cause the soul to reflect Thine image. He only can free it from defilement, and impress upon it unsullied and eternal beauty. No more, O God, will I speak of myself and of my virtues. No more would I fancy myself to be what I am

not. O Thou Blessed Spirit, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner. Enlighten my dark mind: dethrone all idols in my heart: do Thou dwell within me, and renew me more and more in righteousness and true holiness. Have mercy upon me, and begin in me the good work of saving piety: and by the ever-continued and richer communications of thy powerful influences, may I always grow in grace, and acquire greater meetness for heaven. I bless Thee, O God, for having given me these thoughts, feelings, and desires; for enabling me thus to humble myself before Thee, and to call upon Thee. O that I may never lose these views and convictions. Henceforth may I renounce myself, the world, and vanity, and both live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, always remembering that my duty, while I am upon earth, is, by Thy grace, to perfect holiness in Thy fear. Grant this, I humbly beseech Thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST.

“ Wouldst thou the life of souls discern ?

Nor human wisdom nor divine

Helps thee by aught beside to learn ;

Love is life's only sign.

The spring of the regenerate heart,

The pulse, the glow of every part,

Is the true love of Christ our Lord,

As man embraced, as God adored.”

*Christian Year.*

“ He (Jesus Christ) alone is the true God to us men, that is, to miserable and sinful creatures. He is the centre of all, and the object of all : and whoever knows not Him, knows nothing either in nature or in himself. For as we know God only by Jesus Christ, so it is by Him alone that we know ourselves.”

*Pascal.*

If I were asked, What is true Christian piety ? I might answer—It is the true acknowledgment of Christ. He who makes such an acknowledgment is a real Christian : he who does not make it, is not yet that character. Let me, then, here consider, what the difference is between the common and inefficient, and the peculiar and efficient acknowledgment of the Son of God.

All persons who admit the Bible to be a revela-

tion from God, profess to believe that Christ is our Saviour ; and they have some vague notions of Him as such, and are ready to avow that we have no Saviour but Him. But this avowal is in fact an accidental circumstance—the result of a national profession of Christianity, of mere locality, of hereditary privileges. It implies very slight thought, no sound Scriptural knowledge, no spiritual feeling or affection. It involves no lofty views of Christ's person and work ; no grateful movements of the heart towards Him. It is productive of no vital and practical effects. A man owns that Christ is the Saviour, and yet he cleaves to the world, which cannot be held with Christ ; and he walks in his own way, not in the way that Christ has marked out to his followers ; and he imitates the surrounding multitude, from whom Christ delivers his people ; and he cares but little about sin, though the people of Christ are saved from it. He riots in his pleasures and amusements : and in what may be called his intellectual moments, he boasts of his reason, will, conscience, wisdom, liberty, and ability, which things are treated by him, whatever be his profession to the contrary, as substitutes for a Saviour, or as excluding any urgent need of a Saviour. To what purpose, in these circumstances, is his avowal that Christ is the Saviour ? We cannot discover that it has any influence upon him. He is a stranger to the holiness, justice, and awfulness of God ; to the deprava-

vity, sins, and guilt of man ; and to the holy and gracious nature of religion. When he says that Christ is a Saviour, he utters words which he does not understand.

The greater number of Christians, it is to be feared, are living in this state. Some of them oppose the gospel ; some of them are indifferent respecting it ; and some of them approve it, especially its morals. Some of them regularly attend on the public ordinances of religion ; and some of them occasionally receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Living amidst the light of the gospel, having the stated services of religion, and possessing books on religious subjects, some dim and vague ideas of Christ are necessarily entertained. But it is melancholy to observe the ignorance in which thousands around us are living, not only of the poor and uneducated but of the rich and learned, as to the peculiar nature of the gospel. Hence notions, principles, and feelings are maintained which are directly opposed to it, and a line of conduct is pursued which is at complete variance with its holy legislation. Of the common avowal that Christ is the Saviour, it can only be said—that it is, at the very most, little more than a dim and dead notion in the mind.

Is this, my young readers, the true acknowledgment of the Son of God ? You reply, It cannot be. Then let us proceed to consider what the true acknowledgment of Him really is. In a word,

it is that which is personal, spiritual, heartfelt, and influential. It results from a divine agency; and it implies knowledge, inquiry, spiritual apprehension. It implies repentance, or the abandonment of all sin; and faith, or the receiving of salvation. It is the soul's calm and bright day, after a cloudy and stormy morning. It is godly sorrow succeeded by the discovery of Him who is the Consolation of Israel. It implies that the person who makes it has learned, by divine power, the alienated and lost state of man, and that Christ is He who saves his people from their sins. Pride, error, darkness, and death are removed from the soul, and humility, truth, light, and spiritual life are its happy portion. Lofty thoughts are entertained of Christ; holy feelings are exercised towards him. The favoured individual delights in the gospel, feels its spirit, and obeys its laws. To him the Lord Jesus Christ is the Sun in the spiritual system—the centre from which light and life and health and joy emanate in abundant and never-failing streams. In the case of the mere nominal Christian, Christ is comparatively nothing; he looks more to himself than to the Saviour: but in the case of the real or spiritual Christian, Christ is all; the author and giver of pardon, righteousness, wisdom, grace, and peace.

The difference, then, between the common and the true acknowledgment of Christ is obvious. The former is notional, superficial, and ineffectual;

the latter is spiritual, deep, and efficient—and in the latter you see the one great or cardinal point in saving piety. It is a sacred reality, a spiritual fact, experienced, through the power of the gracious Sanctifier, with different apprehensions of it, by all who are truly the children of God and members of Christ. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." This is the declaration of our blessed Lord: but, as we read in Romans, x. 10, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The confession, therefore, of Christ before men which does not proceed from a truly believing heart, is no availing confession of Him. In short, the peculiar and distinguishing thing in the character of the true Christian is this—he has that spiritual knowledge of Christ, and makes that entire and spiritual acknowledgment of Him, which the thoughtless Christian has not, and which he cannot make. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

The means by which real Christians have been led to the full acknowledgment of Christ, may have been different in the case of different persons. They may have arrived at it rapidly or slowly, with more or with less of mental suffering and anxiety. But the thing itself is substantially the same in all of them; and the great Agent in this spiritual work was the Almighty Sanctifier. It is

He who changes man; who produces repentance and faith in the soul; who leads the soul to Christ. Go to the humble penitent: his godly sorrow and humiliation are not a fancy. Go to the established believer: his peace and joy are not a fancy. The latter will tell you, that the love of Christ is a powerful principle, that following Him is a real service, and that true piety is a spiritual frame of mind and heart, evincing itself by a holy and useful life in the midst of a crooked and perverse world.

This acknowledgment of Christ is directly opposed to our corrupt nature. We cling to ourselves, and admire ourselves. The workings of sin, of pride and unbelief, may be various in various cases: but, in general, that utter renunciation of ourselves, that complete looking away from what we are, have, and do, which leads to a pure acceptance of Christ, and to an entire reliance upon Him, is not found either a short or easy task. Even the advanced Christian may sometimes find those high thoughts of himself springing up in his mind, which are inconsistent with living by faith on the Son of God—the great characteristic of the real Christian. It is comparatively easy to make a correct doctrinal profession: but how rare is the deep, unfeigned, spiritual humility, self-abasement, self-renunciation, which, habitually cherished, forms such a large part of the Christian spirit!



Though there is a point in religious attainment at which the true Christian may be justly said to make a right acknowledgment of Christ, yet it is a progressive work. There is a wide difference, as to this subject, between the avowal of a young convert and of a mature believer. Let not the convert think too highly of his attainments, or mistake the warm effusion of feeling for the sober and dignified avowal of wisdom and experience. The feeblest Christian is to be encouraged: but no one ought to think that the full acknowledgment of Christ is to be made in a day. The acknowledgment of Christ in a young believer will be according to the extent of those apprehensions of Him which he possesses: there will not be in him a divided heart: but as there will be daily fresh discoveries of the glory and fulness of Christ, so there will be a more deep, spiritual, and universal acknowledgment of Him. Press onward, therefore, to the foot of the Cross: and your acknowledgment of the Saviour will increase as your knowledge, faith, and love increase.

The true and full acknowledgment of Christ is all Christian piety in a single expression. Whatever you may learn in the course of years, enlarging your views and diversifying your ideas, you will find that you have every thing in this one point—the spiritual and practical acknowledgment of our blessed Lord. Consider the avowal of St. Paul. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless

I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Converse with the aged believer, and he may freely expatiate on many subjects; but will he not, at the close, avow with an emphasis all his own, that Christ is all? Will he not say with the utmost simplicity and sincerity of heart, All my springs, all my hopes are in Him; all that we have to do is to believe in Him, to love Him, and to follow Him?

I will only add, that the true acknowledgment of Christ is the essential thing as to salvation. In the present day, so indulgent, liberal, and accommodating, something like piety may easily pass for piety—and even for exalted piety. Some right thoughts in religion, and some kindly dispositions towards it, are regarded as indubitable proofs of religious excellence. Happy are they who do not deceive themselves or others by what is only superficial and specious, but closely look to that great point—the spiritual acknowledgment of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I would beseech you, my young readers, to examine yourselves. Your present avowal of Christ is not that which I have been setting before you. You think, feel, and act as professing Christians in general. But let me hope that, by divine grace, you will lay the subject to heart, and henceforward cherish the conviction—that the acknow-

ledgment of Christ, spiritually and truly, vitally and practically, is that which is essential to your happiness in this world and in the world to come.

#### THE COLLECT.

“Almighty God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for sin, and also an Ensamble of godly life; Give us grace that we may also most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the most blessed steps of His most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.”  
Amen.

#### THE PRAYER.

O Merciful God and Father, I thank Thee that I am led to consider the great difference that exists between the fruitless and saving acknowledgment of Christ. How long have I satisfied myself with the common notions of the world! Deliver me, I beseech Thee, from all errors and delusions, and suffer me not to trifle any longer in a matter that is essentially connected with my salvation. Pour upon my soul the light of Thy truth: take from me all pride and self-sufficiency; all thoughtlessness, carelessness, and presumption. Let Thy Holy Spirit be granted to me, that I may be freed from impenitence and unbelief; that I may be brought to godly sorrow on account of my sinful nature and my sinful life, and to a saving faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant that I may receive Him as my only Saviour, and follow Him, in all holiness and righteousness of living, as my only Lord and Master. Suffer me no longer to waste my time, to abuse Thy goodness, or to trifle with my privileges. Enable me to be thoughtful and serious in divine things: and lead me, of Thy great mercy, to the true knowledge, and to the right confession, of our blessed Redeemer. Thou only canst enlighten me, and subdue and renew my heart: Thou only canst lead me to the real possession of the light and life and principles of real godliness. Be gracious unto me, O heavenly Father, and grant that through Thy power and goodness I may be made altogether a Christian; approved of Thee as a true believer in Thy beloved Son, a new creature in Him, glorying in Him, and living in, and by, and to Him, to Thy honour and praise. Grant this, I humbly intreat Thee, for the sake of the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## THE PIOUS YOUTH.

"These are Thy glorious works, Thou Source of good!  
How dimly seen, how faintly understood!  
Absorbed in that immensity I see,  
I shrink abased, and yet aspire to Thee :  
Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day,  
Thy words, more clearly than Thy works, display,  
That while Thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,  
I may resemble Thee, and call Thee mine."

*Cowper.*

"Indeed, repentance is a rough and sharp virtue, and, like a mattock and spade, breaks away all the roughnesses of the passage, and hindrances of sin : but when we enter into the dispositions which Christ hath designed to us, the way is more plain and easy than the ways of death and hell. Labour it hath in it, just as all things that are excellent ; but no confusions, no distractions of thought, no amazements, no labyrinths, and intricacy of counsels : but it is like the labours of agriculture, full of health and simplicity, plain and profitable ; requiring diligence, but such in which crafts and painful stratagems are useless and impertinent."

*Bp. Jer. Taylor.*

It may not be improper for me, before I proceed, to give you an idea of the character which, my young readers, I wish you to sustain. If, then, I

were to describe a young Christian according to the notions which you have formed of him from the conversation of the world, you could never think of aiming to realize it in yourselves. He must be pale, moping, and melancholy ; he must be stern, strict, and morose ; weak, timid, and scrupulous ; precise, self-conceited, and censorious ; enthusiastic and fanatical ; full of cant and hypocrisy ; with much feeling and fancy, but with little reason, reflection, and sound sense. In short, he must be an inexplicable compound of absurdity and good intentions. Such is the rubbish of language in which some delineate a character which they do not understand.

But because I do not join in the censures of the world, shall I describe the young Christian with the brightest colours, as though he were an angel ; "a faultless monster which the world ne'er saw ?" Certainly not : I see his defects, and I see his excellencies : but at present I can only put a sketch of him before you—a few of the chief lines of his moral portrait.

1. He does not follow the world in their vain amusements. Piety demands sacrifice, self-denial, renunciation. Much that is pleasant to the unrenewed, splendid to the human eye, and grateful to the natural ear, must be abandoned. The paradise of the young Christian is a garden which the Lord hath planted, where is the Tree of Life, and the River of Life : and in his estimation the para-

dine of the world is a desert, abounding with weeds and brambles.

2. He does not confine his reading to what is empty and fanciful. If he have the advantage of education and leisure, he will attend to the cultivation of his mind: but the works of fiction will not be his aliment. He treats such things as a flower, which he may gather, gaze upon, and fling away. In the Sacred Volume, in sound pious writings, in solid works on Natural Philosophy, in History and Biography, he finds what makes him acquainted with God, with His will and works and ways, and with human nature.

3. He does not select frivolous and vain companions. The youthful heart is warm and social; and religion does not make it cold and unsocial. But the intimate associates of the young Christian will not be the gay and thoughtless, but those who look above the earth to heaven and eternity, who are anxious to excel in piety—to know and do the will of God, and to enjoy His favour.

4. He does not waste his sabbaths in frivolity. To him the Sabbath is “a delight and honourable;” the figure of an eternal Sabbath, and a means of obtaining it. He devotes the Sabbath of God to the God of the Sabbath. His Bible, his Church, his Closet, benevolent labours, meditation, self-examination—these employ him. He cannot make the day of God a day of vacuity, gossip, visiting, sauntering, and pleasure-taking.

5. He does not reduce religion to Baptism, Confirmation, and hearing sermons; to *cliches*, notions, and formality. With him religion is a spiritual matter; an affair between God and his own soul, a divine influence, the gifts of love and mercy, the operations of almighty grace, a spiritual frame and habit of mind and heart.

6. He does not live as if he had nothing to do but to accomplish his own will, purposes, and pleasure. "I may do as I like"—this is foolish and perverse language. The young Christian feels his responsibility. He has a law to observe, duties to perform, talents to improve, a path to walk in. He feels himself not merely a son, but a servant—a servant of God.

But you observe—"All this is *negative*: you only describe the young Christian as separate from others: we wish to see him such as he is *positively* in himself."—I will endeavour to meet your wishes. Consider, then, the following brief particulars.

1. The young Christian is a true penitent. He does not say that, because he has been virtuous and amiable, he has no sin, or is not a sinful creature. His mind is enlightened, and his heart is a heart of flesh: he sees and feels both what he is, and what his conduct has been. Sin is in his estimation the great evil: and his spiritual apprehension of it in himself and in his practice, makes him to be of an humble spirit, of a contrite heart.



before God. He knows something in a proper manner of God, of His law, and of himself; and therefore he thinks, feels, and speaks as a real penitent—as one who is “come to himself”—to a sound state of mind.

2. He is a true believer. He looks to the Lord Jesus Christ; receives Him, depends upon Him, builds all his hopes of salvation upon Him, rejoices in Him, and glories in His Name and in His Cross. Christ is in him the hope of glory. He examines himself, and continually discovers more of his sinfulness, helplessness, and misery. He studies the gospel; he contemplates the person and work of Christ; and is more fully convinced of His glory and all-sufficiency. In Him he sees all fulness of spiritual blessings. The fixed thought of his mind, and the cherished feeling of his heart is, that “Christ is all.”

3. He cultivates holiness. In his view the gospel is the word of mercy and power: of mercy, conferring the richest gifts; of power, acting by the Holy Spirit with a transforming energy. He looks to God, to heaven, to the glorified—these are holy: and those only who are holy will receive an everlasting inheritance above. He therefore desires, prays, and strives to be holy, and to advance in holiness—in all purity of mind and heart.

4. He performs his duties. He is obedient. He views the gospel as a law, which he is to observe—a yoke, which he is to bear—a path, in

which he is to walk—a service, which he is to discharge. “What do I owe to God, to my parents, to those around me, to my superiors, to my inferiors? How am I to use my talents,—time, money, influence, rank, faculties? How can I show that I am zealous of good works?” He is familiar with such inquiries as these. He is no loiterer, saunterer, or idler in the divine vineyard.

5. He delights in religion, and in all that relates to it. Alive to the spiritual world, beholding its magnificence and beauty, its solemnity and importance, whatever relates to it is highly interesting to him. The renewed heart, so far as it is renewed, loves God and Christ, and the things of God and Christ. Is religion *the science* of things spiritual? If we be divinely versed in that science, we shall find that it is also *the taste* for things spiritual. It gives the soul not only ideas, but feelings—feelings of delight in all that is true and good, and in all that promotes the diffusion and prosperity of truth and goodness in the world.

6. He lives in and to God. There is amity and union and communion between God and him. His study and aim, his desire and endeavour, are to please God. Others strive to please the world and themselves; but he renounces the world and his own will: hence his separation from others, his peculiarity of character, his excellence as a consistent follower of Christ.

7. He is watchful, circumspect, attentive to his own spirit. He governs his affections, curbs his feelings, restrains his zeal, guards against impetuosity, in order that he may think, and speak, and act as a Christian ought. He is courageous, but not rash; firm, but not obstinate; decided, but not inconsiderate; conscientious, but not the victim of scrupulosity. He wishes to be calm, sober, and thoughtful; to be humble, kind, and gentle; to be patient, forbearing, tender-hearted, and benevolent. He would speak, without being loquacious; he would be silent, without being unsocial.

Let these particulars suffice.—But I would ask, Is my young Christian perfect? No one is more alive to his imperfection than he himself is. Does he esteem himself, and despise others? He is lowly in his own eyes, and esteems others better than himself. Is he unhappy—gloomy and melancholy, a self-tormenting and forlorn being? Ask him the question; and he will speak to this effect —“I am happy, because I renounce the world and its vanities, and, through grace, have chosen Christ to be my Saviour, Wisdom to be my Guide, God to be my Portion, Duty to be my employment, and Heaven my aim and home. Sin and imperfection belong to me; and I must therefore be an humble penitent: but yet in religion, in its blessings and prospects, in its grace and consolations, I have all that fills my mind and animates my heart; and in the duties which it enjoins, and in cultivating the

spirit which it requires, I have ample scope for the proper employment of my faculties. He who lives to the world cannot be happy : he who lives to God cannot be miserable : the more detached I am from the world, and the higher attainments I make in Christian excellence, the greater and purer and more exquisite will be the happiness and satisfaction that I shall enjoy."

I leave you, my young readers, to consider at leisure the sketch that I have put before you : it is sufficient if it lead you to examine the wide difference between the thoughtless and the serious character, and give an idea of what you must realize in yourselves, if you would be happy here and for ever. If you seek the Holy Spirit, and if the love of Christ thus become your principle, you will be the character which I have described, exhibiting its excellence, and rejoicing in the blessedness that belongs to it. But here I will express my sentiments in the language of an old poet, whose lines deserve, and will well repay, your closest meditation.

" With all thy heart, with all thy soul and mind,  
Thou must Him love, and His behests embrace ;  
All other loves, with which the world doth blind  
Weak fancies, and stir up affections base,  
Thou must renounce and utterly displace,  
And give thyself unto Him full and free,  
That full and freely gave Himself to thee.

"Then shalt thou feel thy spirit so possess,  
And ravisht with devouring great desire  
Of His dear self, that shall thy feeble breast  
Inflame with love, and set thee all on fire  
With burning zeal, through every part entire,  
That in no earthly thing thou shalt delight,  
But in His sweet and amiable sight.

"Thenceforth all world's desire will in thee die,  
And all earth's glories, on which men do gaze,  
Seem dirt and dross in thy pure-sighted eye,  
Compared to that celestial beauty's blaze,  
Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense doth daze  
With admiration of their passing light,  
Blinding the eyes, and luming the spright.

"Then shall thy ravisht soul inspired be  
With heavenly thoughts, far above human skill,  
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see  
The idea of His pure glory present still  
Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill  
With sweet enagement of celestial love,  
Kindled through sight of those fair things above."

#### THE COLLECT.

"Grant, O merciful God, that as Thy holy Apostles, leaving all that they had, without delay were obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him: so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Blessed and Gracious God, I see and acknowledge that real excellence and true happiness belong to those only who are taught by Thy word, sanctified by Thy Spirit, and engaged in Thy service. We may be accounted virtuous and amiable, good and excellent : but he only is truly good in Thy sight, who cleanses his way by taking heed thereto according to Thy word ; who chooses the good part—Christ for his Saviour, Thyself for his portion, and holy and obedient living for his employment. O happy he, who remembers Thee, his Creator, in the days of his youth—who through divine grace begins in early life that course of conduct which cannot fail to give him an ever-increasing satisfaction at all times, and amidst all the events of a trying and changing world ! Such are my thoughts and convictions at present, when I consider what the true Christian character is. But, O merciful Father, give me grace and strength, that I may not only entertain just thoughts and persuasions for a season, but may retain them, cherish them, and bring them to good effect. No longer suffer me to proceed in a thoughtless and vain course, seeking my happiness in the pleasures of the world, and satisfied with myself because I see many around me such as I am. O let me seriously consider what I ought to be, and earnestly pray for Thy Holy Spirit to teach and renew and govern

me, that I may be truly Thine in my youthful years. Bless me, as Thou hast blessed others: plant me in Thy vineyard; and there cause me to flourish, being watered with the dew of Thy blessing, and protected by Thy mighty power. Have compassion on my ignorance and weakness: begin, of Thy great goodness, and carry on within me the work of saving piety, that I may henceforth live to Thee, and enjoy Thy favour both here and for evermore. Thus look upon me, I beseech Thee, and bless me, through the merits and for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Saviour. Amen.

## HINDRANCES.

"Happy, if full of days—but happier far,  
If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,  
Sick of the service of a world, that feeds  
Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,  
We can escape from Custom's idiot sway,  
To serve the Sovereign we were born t' obey."

*Cowper.*

"The work of Christianity is a difficult work : there are many enemies, many temptations : Satan and the world resist us without ; corruption wrestles and rebels within. But here is the comfort ;—God's servants work for a Master that remembers all, who looks to their profit, as well as to His own honour ; who keeps a book for our prayers, a bottle for our tears, a register for them that fear Him."—*Bp. Reynolds.*

You are fully convinced of the importance and excellence of true piety. You clearly see that man can be happy only in God ; and that to be happy in Him, he must enjoy His favour and do His will. You see that the sinfulness of man, both as to heart and practice is indisputable, and that pardon and holiness can be only obtained by faith in Christ and by the operations of the Holy Spirit. You acknowledge that this world is only viewed properly, when it is viewed as a preparation for an eternal state. Lastly, you allow without hesitation, that the true Christian,



however derided or despised by the world, is the only safe, happy, and excellent character.

When you reflect on these things, you feel in your own consciences that you ought to devote yourselves to God and to His service in your early days. But though your conviction be such, you may feel a painful conflict within; there may be in your breasts a halting between two opinions; you may be reluctant to quit a familiar path, and to enter upon a new one. In this state of things, you may begin to explore reasons for being satisfied with your present condition and proceedings, and to postpone religion to a more convenient season. Perhaps you speak thus to yourselves—"Religion is true, good, important, and deserving of all the attention of man. It ought to be his teacher and ruler. The favour of God and eternal happiness can only be gained by walking in the ways of true wisdom. I am fully persuaded of this. But I cannot think of becoming pious yet: it is time enough to be serious. Many obstacles now lie in my way. I am not my own master: when I have more liberty, I can attend to the subject."—Supposing that you speak to this effect, I ask, Is not this the real fact—You are more disposed to extinguish than to cherish your convictions—you are not yet inclined to become a follower of Christ?

But I will admit that you may have hindrances to piety; and let me here briefly examine them.

The subject is far too large and intricate, (and possibly connected with casuistry,) for me to do any thing more than to advance a few slight remarks.

1. Perhaps you may say, that there is a prevailing inattention to religion in your family. If your parents are pious, they will rejoice to see you become so: but if they are not, the case is much otherwise. If they be indifferent about religion, they will not oppose you: but if they have a strong aversion to serious piety, accounting it cant, hypocrisy, fanaticism, and so forth, you may experience much unpleasantness. But do not make the case worse than it is. It furnishes no reason for your trifling with your conscience and disregarding religion; but it furnishes you with the strongest reason for your being prudent, modest, discreet, patient, and forbearing. If they forget their character as Christians, and abuse their authority as parents, and put you under restraints, and cause you to associate with characters whom you cannot approve, and urge you to join in amusements that pain you, and make religion a subject of ridicule or invective, it will be a severe trial to you; but it will be one which, like other trials, should call into exercise the most invaluable virtues of the Christian character. You will have great cause to be circumspect; to watch over your spirit, language, and conduct;—and this will do you no harm. If you show self-will, vehemence, and misconduct, you will deserve dis-

pleasure : but you must put that to the account, not of religion, but of your own perverseness.

You owe all dutiful submission to your parents during your minority. It is one of your first duties. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." Their command, in all things which do not involve a violation of a moral rule, is your law. If they enjoin what you dislike, you may express that dislike, provided you do so with meekness : but if they insist upon your submission, obedience is your duty. The action if wrong is theirs, not yours ; and so is the guilt of it.

You may think that I unduly extend parental authority : I am deliberately of a different opinion. The duty of parents and children is reciprocal. The duty of the child is submission and obedience. What is that of parents ? "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." I consider parental authority to be such as is liable to great abuse : but what an unhappy being is that parent, who would use his authority in distressing the conscience, and perhaps materially injuring the spiritual interests, of a child ! Tremble, ye worldly parents, to distress, and to trifle with, the thoughts and feelings of a piously disposed child.

Your parents cannot hinder you from the use of

the means of grace. No opposition on their part ought either to exasperate or dishearten you. Let it only lead you more simply to God, and to dependence upon Him: and then the opposition, whatever it may be, instead of proving a hindrance to your piety, will purify it, deepen it, strengthen it, promote it. Your souls will flourish in genuine goodness, far more than the souls of many of those who are surrounded with the sunshine of human favour. If you search the Scriptures, if you pray, if you watch over your own hearts, if you cleave to Christ with simplicity of mind and heart, the grace from above will be given to you, and as your day is, so shall your strength be. Young Christians who find all things go smoothly, are not those, in general, who make the purest and greatest characters. Trees that are beaten by the storm strike the deepest roots.

Any opposition at home can only endure for a season; for there is a period when parental authority, properly so called, expires. Supposing, then, your case to be in a measure painful, why should you account it hard to be disciplined during early life in the passive virtues? Your circumstances, be it duly recollected, are appointed of God: your duty, therefore, is not to reason about them, but to serve God in them. He has all hearts and events under his control: and when He sees fit that your path should be smooth, He will make it so.

The best way to disarm hostility, is to show the excellence of piety. If it be your resolve, through divine grace, to be the faithful followers of Christ, it will be your duty to be more obedient, affectionate, and attentive to your parents. Many young Christians, I fear, provoke hostility by self-will, petulance, and other improper conduct. This is both sinful and disgraceful. Cause those around you to see and feel, without a word spoken by you about religion, that there is something peculiarly excellent in it, and that you are far better with it than you were without it. If you be true to the gospel and to your own conscience, acting with becoming love, humility, patience, and prudence, God will bring all in due time to a happy issue. You may see the day when religion shall prevail in your families; and those spots which were as deserts, shall be adorned with many of the trees of righteousness.

2. Another hindrance which you may mention is, the dislike which your relatives, connexions, and companions have to religion, and the odium or ridicule which you will incur by being pious. Becoming such, and not going to their pleasures, parties, frivolities, and amusements, you will be accounted a sort of speckled birds. One will withdraw his favour: another will treat you with ridicule or contempt: and this is intolerable.

Some persons, it is true, are unreasonable and violent; but in general, if young Christians act

with discretion, the period of hostility and of ridicule soon ends. Let them moderate their wild ardour; let them be wise, thoughtful, and deliberate; let them be calm, decided, and consistent; and they will soon win the day. The fixed star that shines in uniform radiance will soon be an object, not only of notice, but also of admiration. Ridicule may vex and torment those who are much under the influence of feeling; but it is not a very formidable thing to a person of reflecting mind who is engaged in a good cause. But if hostility should deprive you of temporal advantages, (and in some instances this may be the case,) you may leave the matter with God, whose promises will be fulfilled. St. Matt. xix. 29.

3. Another hindrance which you may mention is, your want of courage and decision to make so great a change. To renounce the world and its flowery and primrose-paths, to enter upon the strictness and purity of a religious life, and to be henceforth devoted to God and guided by His word—this is noble and excellent; but you have not magnanimity, fortitude, and energy for such a measure. You cannot climb over the Alps. You cannot pass the Rubicon. You wish you could do it: but you feel a want of strength and resolution. Let this be the case: but it does not justify your neglect of religion. If God has given you light, he will also give you grace to act according to that light, if you seek it in earnest prayer.

Any notion of hindrance on this ground is only a token that the heart is unsound, insincere, unwilling to part with its vanities and idols. If at your entrance on a religious life you have difficulties to encounter, yet the greatest difficulty which you have to overcome is, the disinclination of your own hearts to an entire and pure piety. But the divine grace, given to all who ask, who seek, who knock at Mercy's door, will make you more than conquerors.

4. Another hindrance is, you are alone. You want others to encourage you by their language and example, and to sanction your proceedings. I admit the desirableness of having some religious associates: but they are by no means essential. Religious companions, unless they be wisely selected, frequently do far more harm than good. Piety is from God, the Father of lights, the Fountain of good; and He can instruct and train up the soul for Himself in comparative or even absolute solitude, as well as in society. If He withhold from you external advantages, He will compensate for this by the larger communication of His own gifts. Be God's own pupil. If your piety be less intellectual, talkative, and specious, it will be more heartfelt, pure, solid, and efficient.

I cannot proceed any farther in the enumeration of particulars: and I only observe, in a word, that there are no real hindrances to your entrance upon a religious life, but what exist in yourselves.

Your circumstances may be such as we deem unfavourable: but everything arising from this will only contribute, and largely too, to your benefit, if you act with Christian discretion. Serve God in your places: follow His word, and not your own fancies, caprices, and passions: and He will be with you, bless you, support you, and give you favour in the sight of many who for a time perplexed you. He will be your Guide, Comforter, and Portion. Will you, then, act in agreement with that proverb—"There is a lion without: I shall be slain in the streets?"

## THE COLLECT.

"Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Gracious Father, I know and feel that I ought to give up myself to Thee and to Thy service according to the gospel of Thy blessed Son our Lord: but while I meditate and reason with myself on my duty, I find various hindrances to my entrance on a religious life. These, however, I readily acknowledge, ought not to keep me from the performance of what obviously is my duty. Thou hast allotted to me my circumstances in this



world; and whatever they are, Thy grace is sufficient to enable me to surmount every obstacle, and to endure every trial with patience, and to improve every thing to my spiritual advantage. Impress my soul, I beseech Thee, with such a sense of religion as will make me decided and earnest in it. Be pleased to instruct, strengthen, guide, rule, and comfort me with Thy good Spirit, that I may act in my place and condition as a Christian ought. Be ever present with me; communicate to my soul Thy blessings of mercy and grace; and grant that I may think, and feel, and act as a follower of the loving and humble Saviour. Repress all the vain and crude, the vehement and intemperate, the capricious and perverse workings of my heart: and endow me with wisdom, courage, and prudence, with humility, patience, meekness, and love. Enable me to bear trials with calmness and resignation, and to improve them to the honour of the gospel, and to my own benefit. Of whatever I may be destitute, grant me abundant supplies of the influences of Thy Spirit, that I may not only choose the good part, but may enter on a religious life, persevere in it, prosper in it, and adorn it, to the glory of Thy name, the good of my fellow creatures, and the salvation of my immortal soul; through the merits and for the sake of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## PERSUASION.

"In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man.

Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.

Defer not the least virtue, Life's poor span

Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.

If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains:

If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains."

*Herbert.*

"There are but two masters, and you must serve one of them. And what a mercy not to be the slave of Satan in your best years! What a blessing to escape the mischiefs and dangers to which you are so liable; and to be early preserved from the snares, blights, and blasts of the world, the flesh, and the Devil!"—*Cecil.*

HAVING said so much to you, my young readers, on the nature, excellence, and importance of true piety, I would now address you in the language of plain and earnest persuasion. Every sentence that I advance will, I am well aware, be in vain, except it be accompanied with the divine blessing. I have often spoken to the young, and been heard with seeming approbation: but I have often found that a cleaving adherence to the world, pleasure, and vanity, blighted all my hopes. In my present address, I will not aim to work upon your feelings. If it were in my power to awake the tender affec-

tions, a pleasing effect might be produced for a season : but the tear would soon be wiped away, the heart would be soon composed, and you might yield to the first vanity by which you were allured. As your feelings subsided, religion would be forgotten.

The case with you now is simply this—*You have a Choice to make*: and then the momentous question is, What choice will you make? “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.” On the one hand is the world: on the other, Christ and His gospel. Will you go with the unreflecting multitude? “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” Why forget the sequel? “But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Or will you copy the example of Moses? “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.” In other words, Will you be worldly, thoughtless, and trifling characters, making religion comparatively nothing; or will you be spiritual, thoughtful, and

serious characters, "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?"

Choose the world, and what will it give you? It will give you companions and pleasures, laughter and merriment; all that sparkles in the mortal view; all that gratifies the earthly taste. You may riot in tales and novels: you may shine in the circles of the splendid and the gay. All this is very enchanting and alluring: and who can think to forego the varied delights that please the senses and charm the fancy? You will admire others, and others will admire you, in the mazes of the dance, in the ranks of the theatre, in the rooms of elegance and fashion, in the walks of amusement. Your eyes will be bright in rapture, and your pulse will beat high in joy, as you move in the brilliant scenes of your earthly paradise.

"This shall be our choice—at least for the present"—thus perhaps some of you are ready to speak. But let me ask you, What will you do in those days when God lays upon you His afflicting hand? What will you do in the changes and trials of human life? What will you do when you come (for young people die) to the bed of death? What will you do when you stand before your Judge?—But you say, I go too far: I am too solemn and grave. Certainly I am not: for young persons ought to think of what lies before them, and to make their choice of life with a due recollection of God, their souls, and eternity.

Some of you may say, that I put an extreme case; that you have no wish for pomp, splendour, and giddy revelry; that you love domestic comfort and quietness; a friend, a book, and common employment; what is calm, rational, and innocent. I will suppose you, then, to be retired; averse to show, noise, and excitement. You cultivate your minds and tastes; you are social; you attend to family matters. But the one great and essential subject, the gospel of Christ, is, if not forgotten, a very remote and subordinate concern. The tame and quiet world is your idol—your choice. Your thoughts and feelings run in an earthly direction. Your pleasures and occupations are all below. You are not the glaring flowers that attract all eyes: you are retired and unseen flowers: but earth is the soil in which you grow, and earthly is the dew with which you are fed. In this case you are unprepared for the trying and solemn events of life. You are not seeking the favour of God: you are not laying up treasures in heaven. I would here ask you, Is it wise, is it rational, to make the world, in any form that it may assume, your choice? Ought you not to choose the good part, and to act in agreement with that choice?

I would persuade you to be true to your Baptismal promise and vow, which, I may presume, you have renewed in Confirmation. I would persuade you to renounce the world, to choose Christ and His gospel, to cast in your lot among the righte-

ous. I do not allure you by fine promises of exemption from change and sorrow. "Many are the troubles of the righteous." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." I do not promise you a day without clouds, a path without thorns, a cup without bitterness, a sun that undergoes no eclipse.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the world where sorrow is unknown.

There is a sense in which it may be said, that the wisdom from above will give you a paradise: but I know of no paradise on earth that has not thorns and weeds.

What, then, do I promise you? "In me," said our blessed Saviour, "ye shall have peace." This peace, I would observe, is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Nothing can be put into competition with this blessing—peace with God—true peace in our own souls. If you be in Christ, you have true happiness: for you are in a state of reconciliation with God, you enjoy His favour, and you will have increasing satisfaction in your bosoms, as you advance in the pilgrimage of life, conscious that you are striving in all things to do the will of God. You will have repose and comfort in the days of change and trial, of pain and sickness; and you will be prepared for your departure out of this world, whenever that event may take place. You will do

good to others in your day and generation, being centres from which, by your spirit and example, will emanate a holy influence which may be made instrumental in turning many to righteousness. Your life will be adorned with those virtues which will never fade: it will abound with that excellence which will never perish. There will be a growing conformity between your will and the divine will: and you will be able to contemplate the immensity of space, the duration of eternity, the revolutions of time, the ruin of created systems, the disclosures of the spiritual world, with calm, dignified, and happy souls, knowing that you are safe in the arms of Infinite Power, in the shelter of Infinite Love. Times, events, and scenes that inspire the thoughtless and vain with grief and dismay, with alarm and terror, will prove to you the sources of solemn delight. The pious soul has all good to expect—no evil to fear. In short, what has been so well said of Charity may with Justice be said of Religion:

Sweet peace she brings wherever she arrives;  
And builds our quiet as she forms our lives:  
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even;  
And opens in each heart a little heaven.

The young votary of the world is unacquainted with God and with himself; and lives an entire stranger to the sublimities and solemnities that belong to our existence. He is exquisitely alive

to the things of time ; utterly torpid as to those of eternity. He abounds with laughter and levity, and hurries onward from joy to joy. A poetical rhapsody charms his imagination ; the pages of a novel elicit his tears. The scenes of frivolous dissipation fill his heart with transport. The languages of Gaul and Italy are to him as the sweetest music. The hours of gay companionship are most delicious to his taste. How delightful the day ! How is the path strown with roses ! It is all illusion : the roses presently fade : the delight is soon lost.

Let us advert to young persons who are walking in the ways of wisdom. Observe their language, temper, objects, and employments ; observe them on the Sabbath, and on the other six days of the week. They are calm, composed, cheerful, profitably engaged : you see and hear nothing which you can condemn as unpleasant, improper, and unreasonable. They know Jehovah—they know themselves—they strive to walk in holiness and obedience—the Scriptures are often in their hands—they worship God in private—they value the ordinances of religion—they love the society of the wise and good—they wish to use their talents, not to waste them. They have, as young people, their recreations and amusements ; they have fancy, feeling, and taste : but all these are duly regulated. They find that the celestial Wisdom is a queen who has authority ; but her exer-



cise is as gentle as it is holy. In health they renounce the world ; but they truly enjoy all that can be properly enjoyed. In the days of trial they know to whom to look, and into whose bosom to pour their grief. If they fade and fall in the bright morning of their days, they go down to the grave in peace, to be with Jesus, in whom they trusted, and whom they loved and followed.

You, my young readers, have a Choice to make : and since the case is such as I have stated it to be, you will admit that I cannot be too urgent in persuading you to make the right one. Review the subject, and apply it to yourselves with all possible fidelity : and will you not then resolve, in the strength of divine grace—" As for me, I will serve the Lord—I will be the disciple of Christ—I will take up my cross and follow Him—I will take His yoke upon me—I will seek to have a paradise within me—I will strive to obtain the paradise above?" I would urge you to this choice, to this resolve. O think of the glorious God, of the loving Saviour, of the gracious Sanctifier, of your own souls, of death, of the grave, of judgment, of eternity—of eternity to be spent in the perfection of felicity, or in anguish, despair, and horror. Think of these, and let not a subject of such infinite moment be set before you in vain.

But I leave all to God and to yourselves. He only can effectually impress the mind and heart of man. The decision of your judgment and con-

science is now, I may presume, on the right side. But can you venture to stifle conviction, to banish good thoughts far from you, and to turn to the world, and there seek your idols, treasures, and delights, even at the moment when you see and admit that such conduct is unreasonable and perverse in itself, and ruinous in its results? If you are capable of such conduct, I can only lament that you should be such victims of delusion, that the deceitfulness of sin still prevails within you, and that after all which has been advanced, after all your good thoughts and feelings, you are yet unprepared to make the right choice—unprepared to enlist with all your heart under the banner of the Cross, henceforward “not to be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto your life’s end.”

Once more I say, You have a Choice to make. Will you be the slaves of sin and of your spiritual enemies? Shall the transient pleasures of sin be your portion here, and the second death, the wages of sin, your portion for ever? Or will you be the servants of righteousness, having here the favour of God, and then enjoying the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore? You have a Choice to make: and may God enable you, in the riches of His mercy, and by the power of His grace, to choose the good part, which shall not

be taken from you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

THE COLLECT.

“ O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers ; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O Holy and Blessed God, I plainly see that good and evil are set before me ; that different masters, ways, objects, and ends are proposed for my consideration. The world invites me, and offers me its pleasures ; and my heart and fancy are too prone to be delighted with the prospects which it unfolds to my view. But Thou callest me to Thyself, to be wholly Thine : and my conscience testifies that I ought to obey Thy call. The gracious Saviour says, “ Follow me : ” and I know and feel that I ought to follow Him. Can I hesitate as to the choice that I shall make—what master I shall serve, what path I shall walk in, what pleasures I shall seek, and what object I shall strive to obtain ? My judgment and my conscience would lead me to the right decision : how then can I hesitate ! How can I linger in

deciding! It is hard to renounce so much, and to engage in a service so new and different from that in which I have been living. Yet the renunciation must be made, or I shall live, great God, under Thy displeasure, and finally be banished from Thy presence. O pity my blindness, weakness, and perverseness. I thank Thee for the grace which Thou hast already given me, by which I have any right thoughts and inclinations: but, of thy abundant mercy, give me more grace, that I may not doubt and delay, but may choose Christ and His Gospel for my portion, so that I may be enabled to say in future years, if my life be prolonged, that I have served the Lord from my youth. Enlighten my mind, I beseech Thee, and strengthen my convictions, and fix my resolves, and enable me henceforward to act in agreement with them. I would say, "As for me, I will serve the Lord:" the gospel of Christ shall be my teacher, guide, and ruler. Be it so, O gracious Father: and let me henceforth live as one who accounts the salvation of the soul to be the one thing needful. Thus bless me, I humbly beseech Thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Intercessor. Amen.

## CONSIDERATION.

Thus my heart, I want I say—  
In the strength of love  
To the bright track ere it fade away,  
To the pathway to His home above.”  
*Christmas Year.*

...fully embrace the gospel,  
...own wisdom, as an  
...merciful guide; his  
...own affec-  
...own gratifica-  
*Christmas Eve.*

...to receive to manifest  
...the preceding  
...in a serious man-  
...our hearts, in the  
...the heart.  
...the world,  
...to your  
...and fully, on a  
...not subjected to  
...the most  
...the at-

tention of human beings. Shall I banish them from my mind, retain my former sentiments, and proceed in a worldly mode of life? Shall I say—At a more convenient season I will consider them? My conscience and my reason tell me that these things ought not to be postponed. .

“The character of the young has been put before me, not in repulsive colours, but according to truth. I have been led to contemplate my heart and life; and I cannot contradict any thing which has been said. My virtues and amiable qualities have not been denied: my sinfulness and lack of true piety have been asserted.

“I have been directed to consider human life, not such as it is according to the dreams of fancy, but such as it is in reality. I have seen it in its relation to another world and to eternity. Why should I dislike a statement that is unquestionably true? I am here to-day: tomorrow I may be in another world. I am not to be always here: and every hour as it passes, brings me nearer to an eternal and unchangeable state.

“I have been instructed how to regard religion. The aversion of the human heart to it has been pointed out to me; and I have also seen what it is in itself. I admit the truth of that aversion which has been stated; and I admit the excellence, as well as the importance, of religion: so that the aversion to it which is felt by the human heart is extremely unreasonable, and

decided attention to it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty and safety. Shall I cherish an aversion or an indifference which I am compelled to condemn? Or shall I neglect a subject which ought to have our first regard?

"I have been taught to reflect on those important truths, that God is our happiness, Christ our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier; that man is a depraved and sinful creature, and has no access to God, no communion with Him, but through the mediation of Christ and by the influences of the Spirit. These are undoubtedly the great truths of Scripture, and should be treated as such.

"I have seen that the true acknowledgment of Christ is the essential point in saving piety. I am to look to Him, to receive Him, to confess Him, to follow Him. He must be in me, and I in Him; He being the Vine, and I being a branch in that Vine.

"I have seen what religion makes a young person to be. Hindrances to my becoming religious have been noticed. I have also been persuaded to lay the subject to heart, and to make the wise choice.

"What shall I now say to these things? I clearly see that the world, with all its pomp, delights, and treasures, is as nothing, and that religion is every thing. I cannot doubt as to what I ought to be, and as to what I ought to do.

“ Shall I still admire myself, and boast of my wisdom, power, and virtue? I think of the glorious God: and what is my wisdom but folly, my power but weakness, my virtue but a mere tinsel goodness? If I look to myself, I must remain what I am—a sinful creature, without a participated salvation.

“ Shall I follow the multitude, and satisfy myself that I am what other young people are, and act as they act? The multitude may be mistaken in their views and perverse in their conduct. The Bible does not call me to be a follower of the world, but of Christ. It warns me against the world. It is, therefore, no vindication of my sentiments and proceedings, to say that I think and act as others. If I follow the worldly and perverse I shall perish with them. I ought not to follow men, but as they are followers of God.,

“ Shall I cleave to the pomps and vanity, the pleasures and amusements, of the present world? How pleasing are these to the eye, the ear, and the fancy. But they are empty and transient things. Were I on the bed of illness, I should not regard them. If I choose what the world gives its votaries, I only grasp a shadow. A day spent in vanity may be pleasant for the time; but it affords no satisfaction afterward. The great God did not make man to be a secular trifler, hunting after vanities.

“ Shall I make religion a notion, a rite, a decent



formality, an inefficient profession ; a comparative nothing? Have I not been guilty of this? I have repeated prayers, gone to Church, at times read the Bible, and attended to my duties. But I have not regarded religion as the great affair of my soul and eternity. I have engaged in the services of religion ; and when they were concluded, I have thought no more about it. Is this to treat such a subject properly? Is this to please God, to work out my salvation with fear and trembling, to walk in the path that leads to future blessedness? No : religion is more, far more, than vague notion, customary form, and uninfluential profession.

“There is a great and glorious God, a gracious Redeemer, an almighty Sanctifier. All true blessedness is from God. I can be really happy only by knowing Him, loving Him, and walking before Him according to the gospel. His favour is life : His displeasure is misery. O let me not presume to trifle with the awful Majesty of heaven and earth.

“I am immortal. This frail tabernacle will sooner or later mingle with the dust : but my soul will never die. It will live for ever. It will be happy or miserable through all eternity. Can I endure the thought of ruining my soul for the few and empty and transient pleasures of a vain and evil world?

“Eternity is before me : and I know not how

soon I may be in eternity. Eternal blessedness—how delightful! Eternal misery—how tremendous! Surely I do not think and feel and act aright, but as I think and feel and act as a creature who is to exist for ever.

“Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,  
And love with fear the only God; to walk  
As in his presence; ever to observe  
His providence; and on him sole depend,  
Merciful over all his works, with good  
Still overcoming evil, and by small  
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak  
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise  
By simply meek: that suffering for truth’s sake  
Is fortitude to highest victory,  
And, to the faithful, death the gate of life;  
Taught this by his example, whom I now  
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blessed.”—*Milton*.

“I am a sinful creature. I know but little yet about myself; but I know that this is true:—I have disregarded Christ and the gospel: I have not sought the principles of a new and divine life. But if I live thoughtless and heedless, impenitent, unbelieving, unpardoned, unsanctified—if I live in sin, though I am commended by the world, sin will be my ruin. I ought, then, to seek the mercy and grace of the gospel, that I may be freed from it.

“Salvation is to be found in the ways of wisdom, and in no other. If I would enjoy the

favour of God here, and be happy for evermore; I must receive the truth as it is in Jesus; I must be, in mind and heart and conduct, one of His true followers. I am called a Christian; but if I am not truly such, my guilt must be great; for I abuse the tender mercies of our God. If Christ be not in me, and if I be not truly devoted to God in heart and life, I am destitute of true piety, and my hope of heaven is a vain presumption. If I would have salvation, with all its glory and felicity, Wisdom must be my teacher and guide.

“What do I renounce? The world; pomp, pleasure, vanity, and idle amusements; thoughtlessness, sin, and folly; error, presumption, pride, and security. What do I choose? God, salvation, and heaven; present holiness and eternal glory; the instructions of wisdom, the government of grace, the pleasures and the sorrows of piety, the satisfaction of goodness, the recompense of reward. I choose Christ and His Cross; His example, and the crown of glory. Be these my choice: and they will give me joy in youth, happiness in mature life, consolation in old age, satisfaction through the whole of my pilgrimage, hope in death, and the perfection of blessedness through all eternity.

“Such, O ever-present God, are now my thoughts and feelings. But how vain are these, and how soon shall I lose them, unless Thou art pleased, of Thy great mercy and grace, to begin

and to continue the good work of religion in my immortal soul! To Thee I look: to Thee I present my petitions: O Father of mercies, reject not my humble prayer."

## THE COLLECT.

"O God, the protector of all who put their trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Thou Glorious and Blessed God, in these moments of calm reflection I set all things before my view:—the present world and the future, the objects of sight and those of faith, the things that relate to the body and those that relate to the soul:—I bring them home to my mind and heart; and while I am compelled to see and to feel the vain nature of the one, and the substantial nature of the other, how can I hesitate what to choose, or how to act? An immortal soul, here for a little time, and then to enter upon an unchangeable eternity of glory or of woe—surely this demands my first attention. The world, with all which it has to give, vanishes from my sight at the thought of this.

Thy holy word, my reason, my conscience, assure me that I ought to love and fear Thee, and to live according to Thy will. O Lord, be merciful unto me; enlighten my dark mind; enliven my dull and cold heart, and enable me to act henceforth according to my better convictions. Let me listen no longer to a mistaken world, or to my vain and worldly heart; but let Thy holy word be my teacher and counsellor. What Thou teachest is true: what Thou requirest is just and good. Suffer me not to trifle any longer with the solemn and glorious and all-important matters of the soul and of eternity. Being now persuaded that real piety is the good part, essential and blessed, and that every thing else, when compared with it, is but as the dust upon the balance, let me, through Thy grace, make it my first and most serious concern. Pity me in this state of darkness, weakness, and perplexity, and deal graciously with me. Break not the bruised reed: quench not the smoking flax. I bless Thee for every right thought and feeling: but, of Thy tender love, lead me on into the light of truth; confer upon me all needful grace; strengthen in me what is right, correct what is wrong, and supply what is wanting; and make me to be one of those who enjoy Thy favour here, and who shall be inheritors of eternal blessedness. Graciously hear, accept, and answer my imperfect petitions, for the sake of Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord. Amen.

## REPENTANCE.

“What better can we do, than to the place  
Repairing where He judged us, prostrate fall  
Before Him reverent; and there confess  
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg; with tears  
Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air  
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign  
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek?”

*Milton.*

“Conversion (if we may give any credit to the Scripture) is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin, his very heart and nature is turned from it unto holiness: so that henceforward he becomes a holy person, and an enemy to sin.”—*Jonathan Edwards.*

I LOOK upon you now, my young readers, as persons who have some right apprehensions of God and divine things, and who are prepared to consider the subject of Repentance. This is the only porch that leads to the temple of Wisdom. To drop all figure, it is a topic on which it is very easy to say much, but on which it is very difficult to say a little well. In the first place, Repentance is so

much blended, in common statements, with its concomitants and results, that we can with difficulty discover what the writer means by repentance. In the second place, most writers seem to describe repentance as a process that is stamped with much uniformity, so that, according to them, a penitent must be brought to, or pass through, one certain series of spiritual exercise. In the former case, repentance is made vague and undefinable; in the latter, it is made to have only one character.

Several terms are commonly used to describe the entrance on a religious life; repentance, conversion, regeneration, or a being born again: of which terms it is desirable that we should have something like correct ideas: but I am not aware that great nicety and refinement are necessary. I would say that a person is *regenerate*, or born again, when the principles of the divine life are planted in the soul, whenever that may be. I would say that a person is a *penitent* when, like the prodigal, in the parable, "he comes to himself"—comes to a right mind—reflects on the evil that he has, and on the good that he has not, and, with appropriate thoughts and feelings, resolves to seek his Father's house—and is urged to act as he resolves. I would say that a person is a *convert* when he acts in agreement with the workings of a penitent mind, and turns from sin and vanity, and turns to God and goodness, with decision, and on fixed principle. Regeneration, repentance, and

conversion are, therefore, in my view, successive links in the moral chain. 'The first is an implanted seed from above; the second is the agency of that seed in bringing the transgressor to a right frame of mind; and the third is the same seed in a more mature stage of its agency, leading the person to choose and act in agreement with the convictions of an awakened heart and of a rightly thinking mind.

Regeneration can be but once; it is a simple thing: but repentance and conversion are complex things: each of them is twofold. Repentance is primary, and is—restoration to a right mind: or it is secondary and habitual, and it is—after-thought, with appropriate feeling; and with this every true Christian, as a daily offender, is daily acquainted. In like manner, conversion is primary, and it is—our first acting in agreement with the penitential frame of mind, turning from ourselves and sin to God and Christ and holiness: or it is secondary, and as such it contains—that daily improvement in piety which is a turning away from each particular sin to each particular virtue, (St. Matt. xviii. 3.) as we discover our defects, and see the nature and requirements of the gospel.—These things having been premised, I am now to speak of repentance.

It is evident, then, that the primary repentance may be viewed in a very simple manner: it is a restoration to a right mind. This implies, that an



impenitent person is not in his right mind, in a spiritual view. This is certainly the case: for he has not right apprehensions of God and of himself, of his state and conduct, of sin and holiness. He thinks highly of himself; justifies himself; and seeks his happiness in worldly things. He forms no sound spiritual judgment of these matters. But the enlightening and enlivening power of divine grace causes him to see, and think, and feel, and speak in a different manner. It is a restoring influence, by which the faculties are properly exercised. The soul is no longer the dupe of error and illusion.

But if repentance be made merely to consist in a restoration to a right mind, it seems to be only an intellectual matter: and he who knows what is good and bad, and speaks correctly about them, must be accounted a penitent. But this is not the case. The penitent mind is not only one which discovers right, but which also feels in agreement with the discovery. Here the question meets us—What sort, and what quantity of feeling is essential to the existence of a truly penitent frame of soul? I may with safety answer in general terms—that sort and that quantity of it which lead to a sound conversion, as that term has been already explained. If repentance do not issue in real conversion, whatever darkness, distress, and anguish may have been felt, it cannot be pronounced a true repentance. If, on the other hand,

repentance issue in real conversion, though it was attended with comparatively little darkness, distress, and anguish, there is every possible reason to account it a true repentance. If a person be now living in the fear and love of God, in the faith of Christ, in dependance on the Holy Spirit, in the cultivation of universal holiness, and in the performance of every duty, he has been regenerated; he has been a penitent; he has been converted; though he may not be able to detail chronologically all the circumstances in regular succession of that great spiritual process by which he was brought into his present state. Thus where there is that kind and degree of feeling against all sin, and towards all holiness, as really leads to the renunciation of the former, and to the seeking and attainment of the latter, that feeling is repentance.

This statement, however, is not sufficiently minute to afford you satisfaction. It is easy, then, to be more particular: and yet after the greatest prolixity of statement, I should be compelled to recur to my general statement, as the firm ground, as the sure test of a repentance that is sound and genuine.

The common idea respecting repentance seems to be, that it is invariably connected with darkness, doubt, fear, and anguish; with every element and form of mental bitterness.—But it ought to be observed, that various things may modify repentance, as to the feelings that attend it: such as

natural constitution, moral habits, and education. In addition to this, the agency of the Holy Spirit may be infinitely diversified. In a person of cool temperament and firm nerves, and in one of a sensitive and trembling frame ; in one who has spent many years in sin, or been profligate, and in one who is in the morning of life, and moral ; in one whose education has taught him to restrain feeling, to exercise judgment, and to speak correctly, and in one who follows the first impulses of an honest but untaught breast ; it is but reasonable to expect that the feelings of repentance may greatly vary. It is also impossible for us to tell, how the Holy Spirit may act in different ways, with different measures of influence, exhibiting different truths to the contemplation of the soul, in different cases. Hence it is evident, that the common idea, whatever truth it may contain, cannot with justice be adopted as a universal rule.

There are Christians who, to speak so, were compelled to be religious ; and that when they thought of no such thing, and when their hearts were strongly set against it : and this change takes place in a short time. We find others who were taught and influenced so gradually and imperceptibly, and through such a length of time, that they can give no other account of their piety than that they are by the grace of God what they are. The interval between these extreme points is filled up with such a variety of character with

respect to repentance, that no human skill can possibly delineate it \*.

There are cases, then, in which religion suddenly lays hold of a person, and tears him away from sin, and pours into his soul the bitterness of a painful conviction, and leads it through a painful process. But the storm is soon hushed, the cloud is scattered, and he rejoices in the believing apprehension of the Saviour whose blood cleanses from all sin, and proceeds in the maintenance and exercise of a peaceful and happy piety.

There are cases in which the commencement of

\* "Your account of ——'s mental struggle is highly interesting and instructive. It is a faithful picture of some of those internal workings, which, I believe, almost universally, and by a sort of moral necessity, precede the growth, and even accompany the progress, of religion in the heart. These, we may believe, will be more or less painful and afflictive, according to the degree of moral criminality, and also sensibility, in the person by whom they are experienced. The pangs which the Prodigal felt, "before he came to himself," were probably most poignant and severe: and when those who have never, like him, incurred any considerable degree of positive criminality, feel affected with similar intenseness, their mental sufferings flow, chiefly, from a keener susceptibility; and are usually repaid with a very high degree of peace, and enjoyment in believing, when the pangs are over, and the Christian character is completely formed."

*Forster's Life of Bp. Jebb*, vol. ii. p. 22.

repentance is not so clearly marked : the darkness is not so deep : the anguish is not so keen. The process, however, is painful, and of much longer continuance. The individual walks as in a shady valley, with little light, and in much solicitude. He arrives at last to a satisfactory acquaintance with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel ; and then he obtains rest to his soul.

There are cases in which religion acts with a gentle efficacy, but it leads more especially to the discovery of human corruption and weakness and unworthiness. The individual hears the gospel, and admits its merciful and gracious character ; but he takes little or none of its consolation to himself. He walks onward with a sad, a tender, a mourning, a pensive spirit. There is a deep shade of melancholy about him. He is more acquainted with the disease than with the remedy. In this manner he is led into the religious life ; and perhaps somewhat this darkness of view and sadness of feeling may be discernible in him through life.

In some cases religion acts with a gentle influence, and penitents are soon led to the enjoyment of happiness. They are soon brought to the discovery and to the acknowledgment of Christ. They are conducted from error to truth, from sin to holiness, from the world to God, from themselves to Christ, without any painful exercises of the heart. The light and power of religion sweetly

combined breaks in upon them in the mildest manner; and every step is an advancement in satisfaction.

It would be endless to proceed in this manner.—The more general case of repentance may perhaps be thus described—a divine power leads the soul to serious thought and right feeling respecting its state. It is convinced of sin, and urged to inquire, What shall I do to be saved? Here it experiences more or less of darkness and distress for a longer or a shorter season: but the joyful sound of the gospel is heard—the glad tidings of pardon and salvation through Christ are received. A new course of life is the result—a life of holiness and obedience<sup>b</sup>.

As to the sorrow and tears belonging to repent-

<sup>b</sup> “Progressive conversions seem to be most agreeable to the analogy of nature; and though we by no means question the reality of instantaneous conversions, or consider that the grace of God is limited either to time, manner, or degree; yet we have generally observed that they partake too much of a spirit of excitement to form a sure and safe test. The excitement of the senses is a dangerous ingredient in holy things, because they are equally susceptible of opposite impressions. Those conversions ultimately prove most solid and abiding, where the understanding is enlightened, the conscience rebused, and the will subdued by the simultaneous energy and power that moves and purifies the feelings and affections of the heart.”

*Grimshawe's Cowper*, vol. viii. 54.

ance, I would only say, that the true Christians who have gone far in religion without tears are probably few. I cannot say that tears are essential to repentance: but I may perhaps say that they are commonly more or less one of its concomitants. As to this point very much depends, among other things, on the constitution of the individual, and on his former course of life. Certainly there may be tears about our spiritual concerns, where there is no true repentance: perhaps there may be true repentance without tears. But I cannot enlarge on this subject: I would only suggest, that the broken spirit and the contrite heart may be expected to produce tears. I freely confess, I am no friend to a dry-eyed religion. But this matter belongs to the closet, and lies between the penitent and his Heavenly Father.

What, then, my young readers, do I say to you? Seek true repentance towards God; a right frame of mind; "godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Seek a right view of your hearts and former lives, and a right feeling respecting them. Study the law of God, both as to its principle, spirituality, and rules. See what sinful creatures you are. Humble yourselves before the just and holy, the good and gracious God, whose law you have broken, and whose love, mercy, and goodness you have hitherto slighted. Pray for a broken spirit, a contrite heart, a heart of flesh; and let the petition of

each of your souls be, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Piety without repentance, and repentance without some knowledge and feeling of sin, without some shame and humiliation of soul, are non-entities. Repentance, whatever be its peculiar character in different individuals, is the only entrance on a truly religious life. These elements of character, a knowledge of sin, and an alienation of heart from it as that evil which is directly opposed to the nature and will of God, will be found in those who have felt the least of that affliction of soul which is commonly felt by penitents. I do not see how it is possible for any one to be a true penitent, who has not such a sight and sense of his heart and life, as leads him to humble himself before God as a sinful creature.

THE COLLECT.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; Pour down upon us Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord." Amen.



## THE PRAYER.

O Thou Holy and Gracious God, I acknowledge myself to be a sinful creature. If I flatter myself, on account of any virtues and qualities which may be admired in the world, that I am not a depraved and unholy being in Thy sight, I am a miserable self-deceiver. Sin has corrupted all my faculties: in numberless instances I have transgressed Thy holy commandments; and in numberless instances I have failed in the discharge of my duties. Thus, O Lord, I am a sinful creature before Thee. I must therefore become a true penitent; having a right state of mind and heart; obtaining a just view and feeling of my corruption and transgressions,—of my sinful heart and sinful life. But Thou only, O Lord, must give me a broken spirit and a contrite heart: Thou only canst take away the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh: Thou only canst produce in my soul a just apprehension of sin—of its evil, deformity, and demerits: Thou only canst make me humble and self-renouncing in Thy sight. To Thee I offer my petitions, blessing Thee for leading me thus to the consideration of this subject, and praying that by Thy truth and grace I may obtain such right views and feelings respecting sin, that I may be grieved on account of it, and turn from it, and may seek pardon and renovation, so that I may live no longer in thoughtlessness, self-admiration,

and security, but demean myself in all respects as a true penitent. I am sinful, and have sinned: grant that I may rightly feel these declarations: and let my earnest inquiry be, What shall I do, so that I may be truly Thine, and enjoy thy favour? Thou only canst wound and heal: Thou only canst give me right convictions, and bring them to a happy issue. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and work in my soul the good work of religion. O grant that I may now enter on the path of righteousness by the strait gate of a true repentance—of a true conversion. Grant this, I beseech Thee, O merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Saviour. Amen.

## SPIRITUAL DISTRESS.

"Then, fainting soul, arise and sing ;  
Mount, but be sober on the wing ;  
Mount up, for Heaven is won by prayer,  
Be sober, for thou art not there :  
Till death the weary spirit free,  
Thy God hath said, 'Tis good for Thee  
To walk by faith and not by sight :  
Take it on trust a little while ;  
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right  
In the full sunshine of His smile."

*Christian Year.*

"Bear ye then a little while, and the scene will change. When the voice shall reach your ears, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," the cares and gloomy imaginings of this little corner of existence will die into oblivion, or serve but to be contrasted with your bliss, as a dark spot upon the sun's disk, with the unclouded glories of the orb around it."

*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

THE subject on which I shall offer a few remarks in this chapter is one of peculiar difficulty : but the nature of my work will not properly allow me to leave it wholly unnoticed. "The case may be simply stated thus—If I suppose a number of young persons, through divine grace, to attend to

religion at, or about, the same time, and to be steadfast and persevering in it, the result will probably be in many respects various. In the first stage of piety they will be variously affected, as stated in the preceding chapter: but we may suppose that the majority of them, at the conclusion of this stage, obtain the possession of a calm state of mind. They renounce themselves; and they repose on the Saviour. The cloudy morning is past; the Sun of righteousness shines upon them; if a storm come, they know that tranquillity will be soon restored; if the clouds gather and conceal the sun for a season, they know that he will soon dispel them, and shine forth with brighter lustre. In a word, they are serene and satisfied: they enjoy the light of day; they stand upon firm ground; they build upon a rock. But a few of them may not arrive at this happiness—this peace in believing. They are brought to a knowledge of the glory of God, of the evil of sin, and of the need of a Saviour. They have some right views and feelings: but they are in darkness and distress: and there they stand. We converse with them after different intervals: but hesitation and doubt, perplexity and dismay, gloom and sadness, mark all that they advance. They seem to be altogether engaged with their own sinfulness, with the evil, with the disease: but though they hear the gospel, and admit our statements of its merciful and gracious nature to be true, no fine prospect opens before

them, and nothing soothes, cheers, and animates their hearts. They are inwardly disconsolate: and frequently what was intended to administer comfort to them, only serves to increase their distress.

While those who began their pious course with them are enjoying and adorning religion, these feeble and afflicted souls are still at the borders of the Euphrates, their harps suspended on the willows; a deep mist is around them; and though they think of the Jerusalem which is above, it is with desponding thoughts and feelings.

This case exists under a great variety of circumstances, both as to the intensity of mental suffering, and as to its duration. Into particulars I cannot enter in a work of this nature. In general these persons reason against themselves; as though they knew, felt, spoke, and did nothing aright. They cannot hear, read, or pray with any benefit. Others, in their esteem, are every thing: but as for themselves, they are nothing, and worse than nothing.

So far as the case falls under the notice of the world, they wonder that such a lively and amiable creature is becoming a moping and unsocial being: and they promptly prescribe their remedy—some company, some amusement, some change of scene: let books be shut up, and let the business of life employ both head and hand. Miserable comforters! Physicians of no value! Spare your cruel kindness. You do not understand the case.

Even the pious, who have never felt the trial, cannot enter into its nature. Those who have experienced it, and who feel the purest sympathy for the sufferer, know well how little human language can effect in such a case. A few kind hints, a few mild and soothing words, a few gentle assurances, are all that they will venture to utter, except where they see that the spiritual patient requires somewhat bolder treatment.

Where the continuance of darkness and distress results from mistaken views of subjects, or from inconsistent conduct, or from constitutional temperament of body or mind, the wise Christian will know how to treat the case: but where such causes are not known to exist, the case is one which above all others will compel him to feel his ignorance and weakness. It is one, I would say, in which God acts, and, as it were, bids man to stand aloof. He has thrown the gold into the fire; and, for wise and gracious purposes, keeps it there. He has led the soul into the wilderness, and He detains it there for a season.

“Many are the sayings of the wise  
In ancient and in modern books inrolled  
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;  
And to the bearing well of all calamities,  
All chances incident to man’s frail life,  
Cosolatories writ  
With studied argument, and much persuasion sought  
Lenient of grief and anxious thought:

...afflicted in his passage their soul  
...or rather seems a time  
...and of discomfit seems a time  
...within  
...of consolation from above,  
...that repair his strength,  
...parts upfold. — Wallace.

...say, that there is no place here for  
...The faithful and kind minis-  
...to ascertain the state of the  
...to discover where the tenour of  
...complaints where the secret of his  
...is the first, the matter to  
...the ground, the ailment,  
...but it not unfre-  
...With the  
...is baffled and his  
...to the soul  
...but occasionally an  
...generally walk-

...in the Christian  
...of Christianity in  
...happy character,  
...and happy.  
...Christianity.  
...The book  
...and happiness

no account of its imperfection. The vague language that is frequently used in the ministry may favour this perverse mode of proceeding. But vague, general, and indeterminate language can never give a true description of Christian character; and it naturally leads to much error, mistake, and mischief.

There are two classes of happy Christians; the one being composed of those who are happy through the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus; and the other, of those who are happy by their own arts and devices; by their speculations, fancies, and affections. The remainder of the Christian flock may be ranged in three divisions; the first of them being composed of those few to whom I especially refer in this chapter; the second, of those who form the majority of true Christians: and these, I suppose, pass through every variety of Christian experience; but they have strength and self-command, and in their joy they are not elate, and in their sadness they are not depressed and dispirited. Like experienced travellers, they go through storm and sunshine with calm and collected minds. But there is a third division, in which we find very excellent and amiable Christians;—intermediate characters, approaching the first division in their sable thoughts and feelings, and yet able to maintain the dignity of the second division by silence and calmness. If you can get them freely to converse with you, you will find they are



conscious of much darkness, doubt, and hesitation. They have so much of the light and power of the gospel as supports them, but yet they are far from being truly composed and happy. They tread their path with tender hearts and pensive spirits.

I only give you a slight sketch of an important subject. How little do we know of the history of souls! How fanciful are our notions, if we suppose that to be a true Christian and to be completely happy, is the same thing! Let not the distressed Christian, therefore, aggravate his distress by misconceptions of the characters of Christians. These are commonly described in very general expressions, which can give no distinct view of them. A garden is beautiful, adorned with flowers which are cheered by heaven's light, and fed with heaven's dew: but is every part of it equally enchanting? or is every flower a rose? or is every rose blushing and healthful? How many plants there are feeble? How many are torn or tarnished?

All that I say to the distressed Christian is, Do not reason about yourself, or against yourself. You only feel what thousands have felt—what thousands are now feeling. Your affliction is of God—look to Him for consolation. Read His word—close not your heart and eye to His gracious promises—persevere in patience and hope. A calm and bright day will come, which will abundantly recompense you for all your present sufferings.

## THE COLLECT.

“O God, who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Heavenly Father, all Thy ways are in wisdom, holiness, goodness, and truth. I fall down before Thy footstool with a trembling heart;—and what shall I say unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of men? While many of Thy servants walk in the light of Thy word, I am in darkness; and while they rejoice in Thy salvation, I am in distress and bitterness of soul. Shall I ask, Why is it thus with me? Why am I disquieted? Why go I heavily all the day? I would not repine or murmur: for I well know, O Lord, that Thou dost not willingly afflict the children of men, and that Thou hast the best and wisest reasons for all Thy measures. It is painful to travel on thus in the land of my pilgrimage. But such is Thy will: and Thy will be done: only give me, I beseech Thee, a meek spirit of submission to Thy righteous dealings with me. Make me truly patient and resigned; and

suffer me not to speak, feel, and reason in a perverse manner. Leave me not, O Lord : but though Thou art unseen, unfelt, be ever with me, to support, guide, and keep me. Enable me to walk circumspectly, and to wait with a quiet spirit for the time when light shall scatter darkness, when comfort shall succeed to distress, and when I shall praise Thee with a joyful and thankful heart. Grant that I may daily live in Thy faith and fear—strong in the assurance that the eye of the good and great Shepherd is upon me, and that, though distressed, I am not, and shall not be, forsaken. Help me to believe and to submit, and thus to improve this trying dispensation to the glory of Thy name. Hear and receive, O Lord, these my petitions, and be gracious unto me, for the sake of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Intercessor. Amen.

## MEDITATION IN ILLNESS.\*

“ Why fear the path of grief to tread ?  
Why, Father, shrink from Thy decree, .  
If thus my longing soul be led  
A safer, shorter way to Thee ?  
On wings of faith, o'er fogs of earth,  
Thy servant, Father, teach to rise,  
And view the blessing's native worth,  
Cleared from affliction's dark disguise.”

*Gisborne.*

“ Suffering is an excellent preacher, sent immediately from heaven, to speak aloud in the name of God to the heart, mind, and conscience, and has saved many a soul; when, humanly speaking, nothing else could.” “ In affliction see the necessity of it, and be humble ; see the use of it, and improve it ; see the love there is in it, and be thankful.”—*Adam's Private Thoughts.*

In the book of Job (chap. xxxiii. 19—22.) we have an affecting picture of illness.

“ He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,  
“ And the multitude of his bones with strong pain :  
“ So that his life abhorreth bread,  
“ And his soul dainty meat.

\* This chapter may be viewed as parenthetical, (since it relates to a particular case,) and therefore be passed over in general.

“ His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen ;  
“ And his bones that were not seen stick out.  
“ Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave,  
“ And his life to the destroyers.”

Various are the means which a gracious God uses to try His creatures, and to bring them to reflection and prayer ; to wean them from the world, and to lead them to Himself. Happy are they, whether they be young or advanced in years, who, when visited with illness, consider the design of God by such a visitation, and so improve His dispensation towards them as to be able, on their recovery, to say, “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn Thy statutes.”

The following meditation was written for a young person in illness : and as it describes the thoughts and feelings which I would wish my young readers to entertain in such circumstances, I give it here a place in this work : and may the Holy Spirit enable every child of suffering who reads it to profit by it !

“ Thou, O heavenly Father, who art infinitely wise, and good, and gracious, hast laid upon me Thy afflicting hand. I cannot question Thy love. Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works. O look upon me in this season of distress, and grant that this affliction may accomplish the purpose for which Thou hast sent it.

“ ‘ In the day of adversity consider.’ Let me

not murmur, or complain, or envy others the enjoyment of health; but let me think, examine myself, and meditate on sacred and spiritual subjects, that by Thy grace I may largely and permanently benefit by this Thy fatherly chastisement. It is my duty now, in an especial manner, to be thoughtful, serious, and devout; to turn from all to Thee, and to seek Thy favour, that I may be happy in Thee.

“In this season of languor and pain, I feel the vanity of the world. Wealth, pleasure, and amusements can now afford me no delight or comfort. Even the nearest and dearest of those about me can do but little for me. Thou, O God and Father, art the light, and guide, and healer, and comforter of the soul. I am, as it were, cut off from the world: I can look to none but Thee: and I bless Thee for disposing my heart to remember Thee and to think of Thee. This is a proof of Thy lovingkindness. Thou separatest me by this illness from the creature, that I may remember Thee my Creator. If Thou leadest me into darkness, it is that I may seek and find light in Thyself. If Thou leadest me into distress, it is that I may seek and obtain consolation and happiness in Thee, the fountain of living waters.

“But how, O Father, can I enjoy Thy favour, so as to be happy in Thee? How shall I be truly blessed in my immortal soul for time and eternity? Here I would meditate: and here be Thou my

Teacher, and inspire me with right thoughts and feelings.

“Thou art Holy—the Holy One of Israel: but I am a sinful creature. Of these truths I have no doubt: but, O, that I knew and felt them properly!—Thou art Holy—‘Glorious in holiness’—Infinite Perfection. Thou delightest in holiness, and in holy beings: and whatever is contrary to holiness is displeasing to Thee, who art ‘of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.’ There can be no affinity between Thee and any thing that is unholy. O enlighten my mind, and impress my heart with a right sense of Thee, as the glorious and holy Jehovah.

“But I, O Lord, am a sinful creature: and surely it is of the utmost moment that I see it, feel it, and humble myself before Thee as my real circumstances require.—Let me, then, examine myself. I have often said in the Church that I am an offender, a sinner, a miserable sinner. But do I see the truth of this language, and feel its force?—I am not a gross sinner, or an atrocious offender. Thou, O God, hast kept me from dark offences—and for this I bless Thee. Yet I am a sinful creature—and why should I refuse to own it? My nature is sinful: my transgressions are numberless. How many things have I neglected! How many things have I perversely done! ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’—may well be the prayer of my heart.

“I would think more closely on this subject. I am by nature a sinful creature : and I have spent my days under the influence of inherent evil. I have had good thoughts and good feelings : but I did not cherish them. I have yielded to the thoughtlessness of my mind, and to the gaiety of my heart. Thou layest upon me Thy afflicting hand, and I find that I have been living far from Thee—without any heart-felt acknowledgment of Thee, the Holy God.

“What has my life been? My relatives and friends called me good and amiable : but they did not see my heart ; they did not form their judgments by the word of God. I have not remembered, loved, and obeyed Thee. I have not duly improved my religious privileges. I have not seriously thought of the love of Christ in dying for mankind ; or of the work of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier ; or of piety, my soul, and eternity. My thoughts, views, prospects, feelings, objects, actions, and aims—all have been earthly : pleasant to myself and to those around me ; but far remote from religion.

“I am a sinful creature. I have gone, O Lord, in my own way, and not in Thine. What is my conclusion? Repentance is necessary : and wilt Thou not give me this grace? Yes ; O gracious God, my heart, I trust, is no longer hard ; my spirit is troubled within me. This is Thy goodness. I am not left to pride and carelessness :



but Thou mercifully grantest me power to think and feel. O that these thoughts and feelings may lead me to that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation.

“O holy and gracious God, I see, and feel, and confess that I am a sinful creature both in heart and life ; sinful, by the commission of evil, by the omission of duties, by the neglect and abuse of Thy bounty and goodness ; sinful, by living far from Thee, from Christ, from salvation, amidst the instructions of Thy truth, and the invitations of Thy love, and the offers of Thy mercy ; sinful, by living as if I were only born for myself and the present world.

“But shall I plunge myself into despair? Far from me be such a thought. In Thy unspeakable love to man Thou hast given Thine only Son to die for us. He is the Saviour : and every truly humble and penitent sinner, who looks to Him, who comes to Him in faith, shall receive the blessings of salvation. Art not Thou, O Father, now showing me my sinfulness in order that Thou mayest reveal the Saviour to me? In Thy goodness and love thou chastisest me, and makest me acquainted with myself : and, O, in the same goodness and love, lead me to the true knowledge of Him who ‘came into the world to save sinners.’

“I might now be careless, and think of nothing but the world, and desire nothing but speedy re-

covery. I might be proud and self-righteous, and amuse myself with fine notions about my virtues. But Thou dost not leave me in such darkness, and to such self-delusion. Thou informest my mind, and affectest my heart. My thoughts and feelings are a proof that Thou dost not leave me to myself. O that I were truly thankful for such loving-kindness !

“ I am a sinful creature : and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. But what do I know of this Saviour, and how do I feel respecting Him ? Though I have heard of Him, yet it has only been with the hearing of the ear. I have not seen His glory, considered His sacrifice, or chosen Him to my Saviour ; my Teacher, Lord, and Example. I have lived without Him, and far from Him, in a spiritual and practical view.

“ I see and confess my folly. O gracious God, be merciful to me, and grant me the true knowledge of Christ ; true faith in Him, the real love of Him. Enable me so to receive Him that I may be of the number of those who are spiritually Thy Children, members of Christ, and inheritors of glory.

“ But what is faith in Christ ? It is not merely to regard as true what is said of Him in the Scriptures : for of that I never doubted. Such faith has left me to live according to my own will : it has not caused me to renounce the world : it has

not made me pious and happy.—The true and living faith, O my God, is Thy gift—the work of Thy Spirit in the heart. ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.’ Thou only canst make me look to Christ for salvation, and to receive Him truly and spiritually. Repentance and faith are from Thee: and if Thou art pleased to confer upon me these blessings, I shall renounce the world and myself, and I shall seek pardon, righteousness, and acceptance with Thee through Christ only. Then I shall see and feel that salvation is in Christ only.

“Thus I speak: but do I enter into my own declarations? Not fully: but Thou, of Thy great goodness, O merciful Father, wilt give me the blessing of a true faith. Of this I have hitherto been destitute: I have not lived by the faith of the Son of God: for I have spent my days without a right sense of my sinfulness and weakness, and without a just apprehension of the nature of the gospel.

“What shall I now say? I am here, O Lord, an afflicted creature in Thy fatherly hand. Am I miserable? No: I bless Thee for the sadness, darkness, and distress that I feel. I have consolation: for I know that Thy grace abounds; and I trust that Thou art dealing with me as with a child whom Thou art conducting to Thyself. Thou art justice and holiness; but Thou art also mercy and love. O grant me true repentance and unfeigned

faith, that I may henceforth live to Thee, if Thou art pleased to restore me to health; and that I may live with Thee, if this sickness be unto death."

## THE COLLECT.

"Hear me, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour; extend thy accustomed goodness to me, who am grieved with sickness. Sanctify, I beseech Thee, this Thy fatherly correction to me; that the sense of my weakness may add strength to my faith, and seriousness to my repentance: That, if it be Thy good pleasure to restore me to my former health, I may lead the residue of my life in Thy fear, and to Thy glory: or else, give me grace so to take Thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, I may dwell with Thee in life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Heavenly Father, after these thoughts and meditations I kneel at the footstool of the throne of grace, and beseech Thee to look upon me and bless me. I magnify Thy great and gracious Name; for Thou dost not deal with me according to my deservings, but according to Thy mercy and goodness. Thou carest for my soul: and the thoughts and feelings which I have at present, are from Thee. O continue to be gracious to Thy unworthy and feeble creature; and confer upon me those inestimable gifts which are essential to my

welfare. O make me truly humble, contrite, and penitent before Thee: make me a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ: and give me that knowledge of Him, that faith in Him, that union to Him, which are the salvation of the soul. Deny me not, O Lord, the request of my heart: grant that by the operation of Thy Holy Spirit I may be in Christ, and He in me. Pardon me through His precious blood: sanctify me by the power of Thy grace: teach me by Thy word and the Spirit of truth: and lead me onward from grace to grace. Let my present affliction be made profitable to my immortal soul: let it be one of the means by which Thou makest me a partaker of the divine nature. If I be restored to health, may I live unto the Lord: and whenever I am called out of the world, may I die unto the Lord. Support me, O Lord, under this Thy fatherly chastisement: and let these days and nights of pain and weakness be so sanctified to my spiritual good, that I may always bless Thee for this visitation. Enable me to think with seriousness, and to pray with earnestness: and do Thou in mercy hear and answer my petitions. Thus, O gracious Father, be pleased to be with me, to bless me, and to do me good, above all that I can ask or think, according to the fulness of Thy love and grace in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with Thyself, and with the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## IMAGINATION.

“ No man is bless'd by accident or guess ;  
True wisdom is the price of happiness :  
Yet few without long discipline are sage ;  
And our youth only lays up sighs for age.”

*Young.*

“ The great mistake of life is self-pleasing, or looking for a state of rest and satisfaction here—even in the way of religion, instead of taking up the cross, labour in duty, and submission to the will of Heaven, with a renunciation of all worldly schemes of happiness, and patient waiting for death to put us in possession of it. The only happiness of this world is preparing in it for another, and being content without it till death.”

*Adam's Private Thoughts.*

THE influence of religion on any individual is, in several respects, intimately connected with his natural temperament, or constitution. If a person be cool, phlegmatic, deliberate, slow, or reserved, religion will not destroy these peculiarities : and he will be far less exposed to those improprieties into which a lively individual is liable to plunge. He will pause, reason, calculate, and proceed slowly and safely. His errors perhaps will be those of defect. If, on the contrary, a person be

quick, ardent, animated, volatile, religion, though it will act as a guide and restraint, will not destroy his natural character. The majority of young persons will most probably be found to be in the latter class: and therefore it is important for me to caution my young readers against the ungrounded expectations which they may be inclined to form, both as to the characters which they themselves shall be, and as to the happiness which they are about to find in religion.

Imagination is a wonderful faculty in man: but I have never seen its connection with religion, and its influence upon it, or, in other words, its spiritual uses and abuses, ably and fully examined. It is a subject worthy of some master hand. A few slight remarks are all that I venture to advance.

All men have the faculty of imagination, and know its power, to a certain extent; for it is a part of our constitution. Even those who laugh at it, and at those who, in their estimation, are victims of it, are very much under its power; perhaps as much as those whom they ridicule; but the two parties are, to speak so, amused with different sorts of pictures. Imagination is almost always at work in the human breast. Every one holds up to his own view either pictures of the past or of the future; those visions on which he delights or dreads to dwell, as the colours are bright or dark—the forms attractive or repulsive. The covetous man, the sensualist, the votary of ambition, the

admirer of gay amusement, the calculating man of the world—all have the creations of imagination in their bosoms in various hues and shapes. The hoary veteran puts before himself the scenes, objects, and persons with which he was familiar in early life, and speaks of them as if they were present to his eyes. The young person employs his imagination on to-morrow, and on future years, and creates for himself a splendid theatre from which evil and deformity are excluded; where every sound is music, every object beauty, and every hour enjoyment.

Here we see something of the wonderful nature of the soul of man. Confined to a spot, and existing in the present moment, it can recall the past, remount beyond the birth of time, or sink into future ages when the visible shall be no more. It is only limited in its action by the infinity of time and space. It is not confined in its agency to the realities of existence, but is capable of combining, devising, and colouring, according to its own will, so as to riot in scenes of charm and radiance, and to tremble amidst all that is dark and horrible. Such is "creative Fancy's wild magnificence."

"Of human nature ne'er too high  
Are our ideas wrought;  
Of human merit ne'er too low  
Depressed the daring thought."

The Bible, it may be observed, addresses itself very much to this faculty. Its representations of



many things are through the medium of it, whether we look to some of its plain instructions, or to its disclosures of the final judgment and of eternal blessedness. It is a book abounding with images, not only in its poetical, but also in its didactic parts. But this is not my subject at present.

It is obvious now, that this faculty is, in a religious view, of great importance: for we may form by it the most fantastic scenes, and the most injurious; or we may deposit in the chambers of imagery those scenes or paintings both of characters and of prospects which will exercise upon us a most beneficial influence. All our faculties are given to us by our Creator for the best purposes: but they certainly may be most miserably perverted. As a solid, chaste, and well-regulated imagination is a spring of goodness and happiness, so an idle, vain, low, corrupt, and lawless imagination is a spring of evil and misery. Whether we regard, or not, the agency of the imagination in our temporal or spiritual concerns, that agency is most undoubtedly exerted, and that with effectual power. Hence the necessity of watching over this enchantress-faculty; so often fascinating and seducing, but so often delusive and detrimental.—But I am not writing a disquisition on mental philosophy. Let me, then, briefly notice a few of the fanciful expectations which young persons are apt to entertain.

In the first place, you may suppose that if you

become truly pious you are to pass your days in the conscious enjoyment of abundant happiness;—in the light of truth, in the energy of faith and love, in the unclouded prospects of hope, in the feelings of unmingled joy. You will bid farewell to darkness, suffering, and sorrow. Now it is true, that real piety implies the possession of light, life, and rectitude. Then you ask—How can the pious be unhappy? What is Heaven but light, life, and rectitude? So much as we have of these divine elements, so much we have of heaven. If we enjoy these, we shall have nothing to do with the world—we shall have a world of our own—we shall have a paradise.

The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness: for this idea you have the highest authority: but you have no warrant for supposing that you can find a paradise below. We may call the kingdom of grace a Goshen or an Eden; and such it is, when compared with the Egypt and the wilderness of this world. The world abounds with thorns and weeds and beasts of prey: that is, you will always find here trials and enemies of various kinds. If you be true believers in Christ, you will have peace in Him: but as to the world, you will have in it tribulation. Human life is the suffering, enduring and acting time; the time of discipline and warfare.

In short, because you enjoy, as true Christians, various and inestimable blessings, it does not follow that you should enjoy them in a perfect

But after you have advanced in religion, what will your language be? "O my dark and foolish mind! O my hard and worldly heart! O my vain imaginations! O my erring, imperfect, unprofitable life!" I trust that you will advance in knowledge, holiness, and right conduct; that you will resist all sin, and cultivate all goodness: but inherent evil will remain: the leprous house must be levelled with the ground before it be thoroughly purified. How often will you find your souls distracted with many thoughts and cares! What pride, worldliness, deadness, impatience; what distance from God and spiritual things; will you often have to lament! When you feel, in future days, the truth of my statement, let this not lead you to say, that religion has done nothing for you, because it has not caused you to realize your own fancies. It may have done much for you—only take heed that it do far more.

Experience also will very probably subvert your fine dreams about doing good. You projected much: but you will have great reason to be unfeignedly thankful, if but a little permanent good be produced by your labours. If you grow up sound and wise Christians, you will find religion to be a blessed reality, enabling you to think and act as those who desire to enjoy the favour and to do the will of God; though perhaps not a single dream of your youthful imagination will be ever realized.

I do not say, Banish Imagination: but I say, Regulate Imagination. Beware of it, especially in your youthful years. Keep it in subjection to Truth and Reason. Never allow it to be the Dictator. Have as many pictures as you please in the chambers of imagery; but let them not be fantastic combinations; let them not be too highly coloured. Let them be scenes from the Scriptures; from real-life; what may urge you to seek attainable excellence, and not lead you to muse and dote on non-entities—to cherish sickly sensibilities—to be disgusted with the humble and tame realities of human existence—to be the gloomy or irritable victims of disappointment. In more mature life you will not be exposed to the exorbitant agency of this faculty, unless you willfully surrender yourselves to its power: but through the whole of life you will find it highly expedient to attend to the due regulation of it.

## THE COLLECT.

“Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

Holy and Blessed God, I would rejoice with trembling when I consider my present circumstances. I would rejoice when I think of Thy great goodness towards me, in leading me to the serious examination of spiritual things, and in causing me to choose them for my portion. But I have reason to tremble, when I reflect, that, through my ignorance and weakness, I am exposed to many and great dangers. Be Thou, O Lord, my Helper and Preserver. Make me serious, thoughtful, and deliberate: and let me not be hurried along by my own fancies and feelings to any perverseness of sentiment, expectation, or conduct. Give me, I beseech Thee, a right understanding, a sound judgment, in all things. Let me always remember, that I am an imperfect creature among imperfect creatures: and instead of cherishing any vain fancies, let me heartily engage in all the duties of the Christian life, and stand prepared to act and to suffer, as Thou mayest be pleased to appoint. Let me bear with others, as I wish them to bear with me. Instead of fondly dreaming of a paradise here, and of joys and associates almost celestial, let it be my study and labour, by the mortification of sin, by the cultivation of true holiness, and by the faithful discharge of the duties which I owe to Thee and to my fellow creatures, to prepare for the paradise above, and

for the society of the glorified spirits that surround Thy throne. Thus, O Lord, of Thy great goodness, grant me the light of Thy truth and the power of Thy grace, that with a well-instructed mind, a subdued heart, and a life formed and governed by Thy holy word, I may enjoy the blessedness and produce the fruits of real and substantial piety, and finally receive the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul, through the merits and intercession of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## REALITY.

"Plain-path'd Experience, the unlearned's guide,  
Her simple followers evidently shows  
Sometime what schoolmen scarcely can decide,  
Nor yet wise Reason absolutely knows."—*Drayton*.

"Yes—let them pass without a sigh,  
And if the world seem dull and dry,  
If long and sad thy lonely hours,  
And winds have rent thy sheltering bowers,  
Bethink thee what thou art, and where—  
A sinner in a life of care."—*Christian Year*.

"A difficult pilgrimage is before you : but infinite mercy has not left you to wander alone. Your Conductor fully knows the way to that blessedness whither ye are endeavouring to follow Him. Ignorant as ye are, He can give you knowledge—feeble, He can support you—faint, He can refresh you."

*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

By the term "reality" I here mean—our real or true attainments in piety, independently of all the influence of systematical notions, animated affections, and splendid or dark imaginations, by which we may form a sort of false experience, or corrupt that which is genuine. On this import-

ant subject I can advance in a work of this nature only a few cursory remarks.

It is very difficult to discuss religious topics in a right manner, without excess, defect, or extortion: and it is equally difficult for true Christians to think of themselves rightly. The exact delineation of character, as to the minister, and the exact apprehension of character, as to the hearer, are by no means easy things. It is easy for the minister to adopt one idea as a standard, and to preach in agreement with it. His hearers will not question the truth of his statements, for these are deduced from scriptural principles, and illustrated by texts. But when they look into themselves, and into the world around them, and do not find a conformity to exist between what they hear and what they see and feel, they are greatly perplexed, and form improper notions and conclusions.

The minister, it may be supposed, will clearly describe the different Spiritual States of the nominal and of the real Christian. The former will be represented as being in sin, under God's displeasure, in slavery, darkness, and death; the latter, as being freed from sin, in God's favour, enjoying liberty, light, and life. So far as mere State or spiritual Condition is concerned, this is right; for evidently the state of the impenitent and unbelieving is widely different from that of the penitent and believing; that of the former being unspeak-



ably awful, and that of the latter unspeakably blessed. Thus far, I apprehend, the subject is very clear.

But it is evident, that the language which is perfectly correct when descriptive of State is not equally correct when it is used as descriptive of Character or Attainment. A true Christian is a new creature, freed from sin, and has liberty, light, and life; is holy, obedient, and resigned. Thus he is what the nominal Christian is not. But if we merely make these general ideas our standard, however we may defend our notions by quotations, we are partial and defective teachers. The alteration in State is indeed complete: it is a translation, a transition, a passing from death to life. But if our statements lead to the conclusion, that character and attainment are complete, they are incorrect. If we would speak to the hearts and real cases of men, our general positions must be qualified and modified according to the infinite diversities which truly religious character may assume, and undoubtedly does assume. That is, the question remains, How far is the new creation found in the real Christian; how far are his liberty, light, and life, matured and ripened? Now this question cannot be answered by man; for the soul is an object visible to God only; but so far as we can form a sound judgment in this matter on proper criteria, we may say that these blessings are enjoyed in almost infinitely various measures or degrees.

We judge of persons by their temper, conduct, and conversation: and here we see excellence and defect exhibited in ten thousand ways. He who has by divine grace been brought into a new State, has in him the seeds of the spiritual life: and these, by the joint agency of divine influence and human culture, are to produce the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear—all the virtues, graces, and works of the true Christian character. He is a new creature: he is what he formerly was not. But he is not wholly new, as to attainment. A contrary idea will only be maintained by the slave of system, or of fancy, or of mysticism. There is more or less of the old leprosy within. Some links of the old fetters yet remain. There is error mixed with his knowledge, and sickness with his spiritual health. Corruption still mars his holiness; impatience and self-will disturb the calmness of his resignation; and transgression forms a blot in the history of every day. As a true believer, he has the second Adam: but as the offspring of the first Adam, he is a creature whose faith, love, and hope are not perfect.

He, then, will preach most according to truth and fact, and most to men's bosoms, who wisely studies this subject in its amplitude and diversity. Perhaps too little attention is in general given to it. Hence arises much mischief: calm and reflecting Christians are perplexed, the modest and humble are dispirited, and the fanciful and sanguine

are left to cherish those notions which will not endure scrutiny, and which are at variance with the convictions of their own hearts.

Happy is he who has made attainments in real piety; who forms a right estimate of them; and who, not blinded by error and not duped by imagination and feelings, is faithful and laborious in advancing in the divine life!

If I were skilful in moral analysis, I might take twenty or thirty of your number, my young readers, and, by considering the joint agency of divine grace, of natural constitution, of education, and of other circumstances, put before me so many real Christians, substantially the same, and yet circumstantially different to a wide extent. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon such a task.

In speculation we propose to you a high standard of Christian excellence: and this is right, for it is scriptural. What is the Christian life? A walk on a straight line. It is very desirable that it should be such. But, laying aside theory, what is the fact? The path of the Christian is far from being a straight line—it is deviating from it continually more or less.

I may set before you some persons who are really eminent in religious excellence. You examine them, and you are satisfied with them. You may, by close inspection, discover some imperfections: but their goodness is so unquestionable and unbounded, that you are unwilling to

summon them before the bar of criticism. You admit that they make near approaches to the high standard of speculation. These are comparatively few. In them grace is powerful, and nature is subdued; they walk in the light of truth, in the peace of faith, in the joy of love, in the consolations of hope; and their holy conversation proves that they are not the creatures of speculation and of fancy. A thousand things may enable a person to speak finely and to profess fairly: but only one thing, the effectual grace of God, can enable a person to live well.

Passing over these excellent characters, we may look on the rest of real Christians as a miscellaneous body abounding with a great variety of character.—In one class intellect predominates. Here you may find lofty speculators, shrewd reasoners, vehement disputants. These judge of themselves and of others by a reference to some abstruse or novel subject in religion to which they attach great importance. They think themselves strong, because they are bold; others weak, because they are humble. Intellectual abstractions are made too much by them the proof and measure of spirituality. But you may find too often that their temper, conversation, and conduct fail to reflect much credit on their Christian profession.

In another class fancy and feeling predominate. These have their favourite views and sentiments. Privilege, enjoyment, happiness, and peace, all the

delightful words which the vocabulary of religion supplies, are frequently on their lips. They are pleased with warmth, ardour, zeal, sensibility: they are enchanted with them. In the sound and practical part of piety you may find them defective. They are rather gazers and admirers, than labourers.

There is another class composed of cool, sober-minded persons. They have no high doctrinal views, no animated feelings: they do not see very clearly, or feel very strongly. They strive to do the will of God. But many account them legal characters, doers, strangers to gospel privileges. They ought to enter more deeply into the pure gospel: but you may justly prefer them, on close observation, to many of those whose notions are more correct, and whose feelings are more lively.

There is another class who have some besetting sin or sins to oppose. There is in them some bitter root of evil—some poisonous weed. In some, it is a spiritual sin—pride, anger, worldliness, covetousness, ambition: in others, some corporal sin, some inordinate appetite or other. A Christian State, as I use the expression, is incompatible with subjection to sin, with the indulgence of it, but not with its existence: and the truth of the State is evidenced by the faithful mortification of all sin, and especially of the besetting sin.

Another class is composed of diffident and

trembling Christians. They know, and hear with gladness, the truths of the gospel. But the light is not light to them: the joy is not joy to them: they have no strength: they are disconsolate.

There is also a class of animated and bustling Christians. They are absorbed in plans, busy in action, going to revolutionize a district in a few days. You will admire their zeal, decision, public spirit, and efforts. But they abound too much in schemes, talk, and mechanism: and if they adorn religion, it is rather by their public than their private life—which, you may justly observe, is an inversion of the right order.

I cannot go farther into particulars: but I would observe, that there is an inconceivable variety in the experience of the individual. If we say that real Christians as a body come up to a high standard of excellence, we are wrong: and we are equally wrong if we say that excellent Christians uniformly live in a pure and clear element. They are happy; but they are not strangers to bitterness and anguish. They have their clouds and thorns. Such is the imperfection of the present state. If it be a paradise in speculation, yet it is a wilderness in experience: let it suffice if in this wilderness we feed on the bread of life, and drink the waters of a spiritual Rock, and follow the guidance of that light which will lead us to the true, and only, and eternal paradise.

Having advanced what I judge to be sufficient

in this slight work to show you the variety that exists as to religious attainment and character, I can only mention in a few words some of the practical uses of this important subject.

1. Be sober, wise, moderate, discreet: beware of speculation, fancy, and mysticism: attend to the reality of things, both as to yourselves and others.

2. Be thankful for the least measure of real attainments in piety; but be humble, always remembering that they fall very far short of the proper standard—of what they ought to be.

3. Do not at any time mistake your own characters, or those of others. If in this world you have sufficient grace, with its fruits, to make you rejoice, yet you have sufficient corruption, sins, and defects to make you penitents.

4. Be diligent, not in learning human opinions, not in exciting feelings and cherishing imagination, but in seeking grace, true knowledge, holy principle, real excellence of every kind in a still higher degree.

5. Never be reconciled to any defect: never spare and dandle any sin. All defect and incongruity is to be lamented and opposed. Though every deficiency from a high standard does not justify the conclusion, that we are not true believers, yet any indulgent view and treatment of such deficiency is a most fearful sign in a religious character.

6. Beware of making the defects of any advanced believers a plea or excuse for your own. "Such an eminent person had the same failing which I find in myself." Miserable remark! Why not say in plain words—"This defect is pleasing to me: I will not aim to correct it?"

7. Learn how to hear ministers. Break down their general statements so as to make particular deductions from them, and applications of them. What they say is true: but you must examine what they say, and use it rightly.

8. Think wisely of real Christians. Do not cover them with fanciful decorations. The gold is good: but it has more or less of alloy mingled with it.

9. Think wisely of the gospel. It does great things for man; and it requires man to do great things for himself—to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

10. Think wisely of yourselves; of the present life, and of your duty. Sinful creatures in a world of trial, change, and trouble, but faithfully opposing all evil and faithfully aspiring after all excellence—such are the best in the present state. Ever remember those noble and animated verses—the first nine verses of the second epistle of St. Peter.

#### THE COLLECT.

"O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast



fear and love ; Keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy Name ; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

THE PRAYER,

O Thou who searchest the hearts and triest the reins of the children of men, I would humble myself before Thee, and earnestly pray that I may be sound in the faith, approved in Thy sight. What is man, O Lord, without Thy grace and guidance? How liable to errors and delusions! How easily do we mistake, where mistake is unspeakably dangerous! In how many ways may we abuse the choicest blessings! To whom can I look but to Thee who hast all things under Thy control, and who art the source of all good? Mercifully look upon me, and let me not become the victim of erroneous opinions or of idle fancies. Be Thou my Teacher, by Thy word and Holy Spirit. Let my piety be the result of divine operation, not mingled with the perverse workings of my own heart. Deliver me from those fancies which lead to a corruption of the true faith. Whatever I am in religion, let me be really taught of Thee, and sanctified and ruled by Thee: and let me advance in piety according to the blessed influences granted me from above. Truly believing in Christ Jesus, walking humbly with Thee in faith and fear and love, doing justice, and loving mercy, let my life

be truly a pious life—a life of devotedness to Thee, and a preparation for an eternal world. Enable me, O Lord, to be circumspect and considerate in all things, that I may never be seduced from the ways of the true wisdom by deceit or flattery, but that I may glorify Thee here, through the continued supplies of Thy grace, by an humble, holy, and useful life, and may finally be received into Thy everlasting kingdom. Grant this, O heavenly Father, through the merits and for the sake of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## DANGERS.

"Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill;  
Bend the straight line to their own crooked will;  
And with a clear and shining lamp supplied,  
First put it out, then take it for a guide.  
Halting on crutches of unequal size,  
One leg by truth supported, one by lies;  
They sidle to the goal with awkward pace,  
Secure of nothing but—to lose the race."

*Cowper.*

"It is an easy matter for a man to run hard for a spirt, for a furlong, for a mile or two: O, but to hold out for a hundred, for a thousand, for ten thousand miles—that man who doth this, he must look to meet with cross, pain, and wearisomeness to the flesh, especially if as he goeth he meeteth with briers and quagmires, and other incumbrances that make his journey so much the more painful."—*Bunyan.*

Our blessed Lord has taught us the necessity of deliberate moral calculation. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

It is a great mistake to suppose, that it is an easy thing to live as a true Christian—to persevere and prosper in the divine life. Some vessels may leave the port, and go to the farthest part of the world in safety: others sail prosperously for a time, and then encounter storms, and are dashed against rocks: and others soon return, from apprehended storms or discovered defects, to the harbour which they had left. The application of this common imagery to the Christian life is obvious.

All that lies before us in the voyage of life is allotted us by Him who knows our frame, and what discipline and trial are proper for us. But let us not form any vain ideas. Trials and dangers may be expected in every stage of our existence; and it is important that we should be acquainted with them. If, my young readers, you go on well for a season, until you have gained strength and experience, it may reasonably be hoped that you will go on well afterwards. I suppose that you have left the port; that you have begun the voyage: and I would here point out a few of the dangers to which you may be exposed in the earlier part of the Christian life. I will address you in the way of caution.

1, Beware of transient piety. Many circumstances may have induced you to consider religion, and apparently to embrace it. You heard it; you read about it: the heart was affected, and the fancy was charmed. You associated with the

good, and did many things gladly, and assumed a very pleasing and hopeful appearance; You weighed anchor—hoisted the sail—quitted the haven—saw the vast and wide sea—are you certain to proceed? There are those of whom it may be said—"your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away." There are those who "receive the seed into stony places—that hear the word, and anon with joy receive it—yet they have no root in themselves; but dure for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Sound views, real conviction, deep earnestness, and fervent, persevering prayer—where these are not, what can we expect but transient piety?

2. Beware of sentimental piety; or of that piety which exists in the imagination and feelings. Elegant language, fine thoughts, remote and lofty speculation, exquisite taste, delineations of abstractions and possibilities—these are the aliment of sentimental souls. The plain truths, and the plain facts, and the plain duties of the Christian life are tame, dull, insipid, and common-place matters to such. There is much the same difference between sentimental and true piety as there is between a piece of fiction and a real history. Beware of ideal religion—of moral non-entity—of that attenuated material which cannot be grasped. Ever keep down and keep close to the plain and sober reality of things.

3. Beware of ultra piety. There are extremes in all things. If you be cool in constitution, and timid in spirit, you may not go far enough: and if you be sanguine and bold you may go too far: passing due limits, showing an intensity in action, moving in an orbit very eccentric and irregular. You will look on most around you as cold, sleeping, creeping beings who do not know their privileges. Your imagination is ardent, your feelings are excessive, and you select a line which you propose to yourselves as the standard of excellence. Ultra-piety is not the piety of the Bible: it is piety mixed with strange fire—with the passions of human nature. If you would shine in the majesty, propriety, and beauty of the Christian character, deficiency must be supplied, and exorbitance corrected.

4. Beware of notional and party piety. You already know, or at least will soon know, that the Church of Christ is a divided and a subdivided body; and that some Christians hold one class of sentiments; and others, another class. Your associates will wish you to think as they think. You may sometimes fall into the company of others who will be anxious for you to adopt their opinions. Your minds will be called into exercise. You may examine various subjects: but guard against the adoption of those speculations which form the basis of party piety. Why should you think of embracing as undoubted verities notions that origi-

nate in rashness, ignorance, or mistake? Be plain, sound, humble Bible Christians. Let the spirit of the Anglican Church be your spirit. Enlarge and modify your views in the course of time, as God is pleased to enlighten your minds. If you enter into speculation and party, the mischief will be great—your views will be partial and limited; prejudices will be generated, or strengthened; and the heart and life will be neglected.

5. Beware of superficial and semi-piety. It is to be feared that this accommodating sort of moral-material too widely prevails among us. A few right views, pleasing dispositions, benevolent actions, patronising good plans—with plenty of worldly conversation and company, and with no aversion to some of the world's vanities and amusements—how often does this pass for piety! These persons talk freely of religious characters, books, schools, charities, societies—but when do they talk of religion—of spiritual things in a spiritual manner? I would caution you against a piety that does not pervade the soul, and rule all the faculties of man. We are not to judge others; but persons who show so little abiding and influential spirituality of thought and feeling cannot be contemplated without some painful feelings.

6. Beware of loquacious piety: that is, of a voluble mode of talking about religion, with little reflection and feeling, as a mere matter of course. The sacredness of the subject, and the persons who

may be present, are not regarded. Here, also I would notice a prattling and gossiping mode of proceeding in religion, in which some Christians delight to indulge. When young persons meet, (not that the thing is by any means confined to them,) who have more ardour than sobriety, more language than knowledge, they may delight each other with their animated effusions, and think that they benefit each other. The probability is, that the benefit by no means counterbalances the mischief. As few things are more beneficial than wise conversation in religion, so few things are more injurious than crude colloquial rhapsody. It excites the feelings, wakes the imagination, confirms prejudices, rivets errors, and drives the soul onward by a sort of power that makes all its movements disorderly. Be thoughtful, humble, wise, modest, and discreet in religion: and then you cannot well talk about it too much.

17. Beware of proud and censorious piety. You may find persons who seem to presume that religion authorizes them to think highly of themselves, and meanly of others, and to display their wit and acuteness in their critical strictures. But no two things are more opposed to the spirit of the gospel than pride and uncharitableness: they are also in the highest degree injurious both to those who cherish them, and to the cause of religion. Those who are proud are strangers to themselves: and those who are severe with others are, most



probably, blind to their own faults. He who is rightly acquainted with his own heart and life, will be humble and charitable; more ready to debase than to exalt himself, and to conceal or extenuate the faults of others, than to make them the topics of declamation or invective. The proud and censorious Christian, smart, lively, and sportive as he is, gives us ample proof that, whatever be the case of those whom he censures, his own case is far from being good. Pride and uncharitableness are often the forerunners of stumbling, declining, falling, and other perilous things.

8. Beware of irregular and fitful piety. You may find some persons who are treating religion to-day as every thing, but who to-morrow, or a few days hence, will treat it as almost nothing. At one time, with certain persons, and in some circumstances, they are full of ardour and decision: at another time, with other persons, and in other circumstances, you would be at a loss to discover in them any proof of influential religion. Their piety is as a mountain torrent, sweeping all before it, and then disappearing;—not as a stream supplied from a fountain, uniformly the same, and spreading life, health, and beauty wherever it flows. Their case is painful: but remember that you are yet in the flesh, and that it requires no common care, as well as succours from above, to be consistent Christians. A thousand accidental things may touch the feelings, kindle zeal, and create im-

petuosity: but only one thing can produce a calm, uniform, progressive, persevering piety—which thing is, a heart right with God.

9. Beware of a hidden piety. “My religion is a matter between God and my own soul: what have the world to do with it? I may show it, or conceal it, as circumstances require.” This is a most delusive sort of reasoning. You are required to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,” and thus be led to glorify God. I do not say to you, Be forward, bold, crude, noisy, and obtrusive. But I must say, Be faithful, open, and honest. Honour God, and He will honour you. Grace may be compared to a lamp—it burns with a pure light—but if you hide it in a dark lanthorn, through shame or cowardice, or to escape ridicule and opposition, you do it at your peril. There is a wide difference between courage and temerity, between ostentation and honest openness: but in order to avoid one extreme, be careful not to rush into another—and that perhaps by far the worst of the two.

In directing your attention, my young readers, to the subject of Dangers, I have not noticed a variety of obvious particulars—the world, with its ten thousand baits; the flesh, with its varying corruptions; Satan, with his countless stratagems: but I have noticed some of those perversions of piety to which you are exposed, and by which you

may be seriously injured, especially in early years. The different points which I have mentioned are not the fictions of the mind: they are painful and sad realities. The means of safety are obvious. Keep to your sacred Chart, the Scriptures: look unto Jesus: be watchful and cautious, thoughtful and sober, humble and devout: implore divine guidance and protection: beware of your own hearts and imaginations: have much to do with wisdom and the wise: guard against man, and do not lend a too ready ear to every enchanting rhapsodist. If you rightly remember God and eternity you cannot be triflers: and as long as you are serious, thoughtful, humble, and devout, you will proceed safely and prosperously. You will not be conquered by your enemies, but you will conquer them: you will not degenerate into any of those characters to which I have directed your attention: you will not only begin the Christian race, but you will pursue it, guarding against dangers, and surmounting all difficulties; and you will obtain at last the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

#### THE COLLECT.

"O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection,

as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Gracious God, grant that I may duly consider the numerous dangers to which I am exposed, in an evil world, and with a nature so frail and corrupt. Having in some degree a just apprehension of myself and of my circumstances, may I always look to Thee for grace, and depend upon Thee only. Grant that my entrance on a religious life may be the blessed effect of Thy restoring grace: and by the same almighty grace may I daily go forward in the way everlasting. Give me, O Lord, such a sense of religion, that I may always treat it with a reflecting mind, an humble heart, and deep reverence. O inspire me more and more with its pure and transforming efficacy, that in my temper, conversation, and conduct I may show forth its excellence. Let it be my study, labour, and earnest prayer, that I may avoid the errors and improprieties which I may behold in others, to which I myself am liable, and which, however specious or pleasing in some respects they may seem at the present time, would be highly injurious to my own piety, detrimental to the cause of truth, and furnish matter for painful recollections at a future period. With Thy word for my guide, Thy grace for my strength,

the counsels of the wise and experienced for my help, may I walk in the way of truth and holiness ; my soul prospering in all goodness, and my life being adorned with the fruits of righteousness. Preserve me, O Lord, and guide me, and rule over me, that I may never wander from Thy truth and Thy righteous laws ; that I may never abuse Thy goodness, but cultivate and exhibit the genuine spirit of unfeigned piety. Solid, real, and decided in religion ; not mistaking a shadow for substance ; humble, sober, uniform, persevering, and open in the profession of the truth ; may I live to Thy honour and glory, my own salvation, and the good of many. Grant this, I beseech Thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Advocate. Amen.

## THE WISE COURSE.

"Pitch thy behaviour low ; thy projects high ;  
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be.  
Sink not in spirit : who aimeth at the sky,  
Shoots higher much, than he that means a tree.  
A grain of glory mixed with humbleness  
Cures both a fever and lethargickness."

*Herbert.*

"If heaven be my home, and Christ my way, I will learn to know my way, ere I haste to travel to my home. He that runs hastily in a way he knows not, may come speedily to a home he loves not. If Christ be my way, and heaven my home, I will rather endure my painful walk, than want my perfect rest. I more esteem my home than my journey : my actions shall be led by knowledge, my knowledge be followed by actions. Ignorance is a bad mother to devotion, and idleness a bad steward to knowledge."

*Warwick's Spare Minutes.*

If the matter of first importance is, to be true Christians, the matter of next importance is, that true Christians should be judicious Christians : for unless they be such, they do not prosper in piety, they do not adorn religion as they ought, and they have not that influence in the world which they ought to have. Let it also be observed, that real

Christians by injudicious conduct, not only fail to do good, but they also do much harm; for they strengthen the prejudices of the world against the gospel of Christ. Bear with me, then, my young readers, while I advance a few directions which may not at present be in all respects palatable, especially if you be lively and sanguine, but of which you will learn the value as you proceed in life.

I most certainly wish you to be altogether Christians, entirely devoted to God and to His service according to the gospel of His Son. "Follow," as Caleb did, "the Lord your God wholly." Put yourselves completely under the government and guidance of the Gospel. It is not possible to be too religious. You cannot love God, believe in Christ, be led by the Spirit, employ your faculties, time, and talents by the laws of Scripture, too much, too unreservedly, too uniformly. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

But it is possible to mix human nature with our piety; that is, to corrupt our piety by human passions and imaginations, and to diminish the excellence and beauty of our character by the fruits of those passions and imaginations. Be true and entire Christians; be also wise and judicious Christians: and therefore guard against every thing that may debase your piety.

Does a wise pilgrim wander from one place to another, continually leaving his path, from the impulse of caprice, or to gratify his taste? No: he

advances in as direct a line as he can, and that calmly, firmly, perseveringly. Imitate the pilgrim. Is this a cold direction? However you may think or feel at present, you will find that your peace, honour, and usefulness very much depend upon your attending to it.—But allow me to give you a few of my cold directions.

1. Remember Caution. Where and when? you ask: and I answer, In all places and at all times. “Take heed”—is a scriptural expression. Do not hastily praise or censure. Do not hastily admit notions or adopt measures. Be not hastily influenced by what you see or hear. Sensible of your dangers, of your inexperience, of the deceitfulness of things, of inviting voices, paths, and objects, be cautious, in public, in private, and habitually.

2. Remember Silence. I do not enjoin you to be altogether silent in religious matters. That would be absurd. But I mean to say, that religion, especially in early life, when so little can be known of it, and when the feelings are apt to be vehement, is more a subject for calm thought than it is for fluent language. I am inclined to think, that when our tongues are very voluble, our minds are very unreflecting. Duly consider the sacredness and importance, the majesty and solemnity of sacred things, and take care that you understand well what you are going to speak about, and then speak as much as you please; for you will speak



with modesty and diffidence: and that is all that I wish to inculcate upon you.

3. Remember Thought. Happy is he, whether young or old, who thinks much, and calmly, and deeply, and habitually in religion. To meditate on what we read and hear, is the way to profit by it. To think on measures before we adopt them, is the way to prevent many evils, and to do more good. By thought we learn the nature of things; their relations, operations, and ends. By thought we restrain imaginations and feelings; we strengthen our principles; and we give a solidity to our character. A man of thought becomes a man of understanding: and he is respected and influential in the world.

4. Remember Reading, "Give attendance to reading"—thus St. Paul directed Timothy. You may read too much, or in a careless manner, or what is unprofitable. He who reads his Bible most in a right manner, bids fair to be the best character. As to other books be select. Read what deserves reading; understand it; digest it; apply it to yourselves. Thus your minds will be enlarged, and furnished with valuable knowledge. It is our duty to improve our faculties as much as we can. To be real Christians is essential to our welfare: in addition to this, to be well-informed Christians is very desirable, very important.

5. Remember the Reality of things. Do not mistake your own notions for truth; your feelings,

for spiritual life; your actions, for good works. Make deductions for all the alloy of human nature which you have mingled with them. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What is derived from above constitutes the reality of piety. If you are timid and doubting, you may sink below your measure of reality: if you are animated and volatile, you will be apt to outstrip it. A right view of this subject will keep you from thinking more highly of yourselves than you ought. It is far better to grow slowly under the care of your living Head, than to grow with apparent rapidity by the fervour of the excited heart.

6. Remember Activity. True piety is practical. This you see and feel. Most undoubtedly you are not to reduce religion to notions, feelings, and imaginations. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Beware of idleness: be young labourers in the vineyard. In your sphere, and according to your means and opportunity, adorn and recommend the gospel by doing all you can for the glory of God and the benefit of man.

7. Remember Prudence. Show me an instance in which our blessed Lord was imprudent either in word or deed, and I will blot prudence out of the vocabulary of religion. Peter was imprudent: and you see in him something of what an impru-

dent character is. By imprudence in language, in conduct, in adopting opinions, in forming connections, what sad work do many young Christians often make in religion! Always let Knowledge go before you, and show you the path in which you are to walk. Feelings are good helpers; but they are miserable guides. The all-wise God can only approve what is wise in His children. Own this practically. Admit the supremacy of Wisdom: converse much with her: then let the affections be kindled, and they will give the heart a salutary glow.

8. Remember Fear, Humility, and Dependence. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." "He giveth more grace to the humble." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." By Fear, I mean a Reverence for God; and a fear of falling into sin: by Humility, a just sense of man's sinfulness, weakness, and frailty: by dependence, a true reliance on God for all blessings. Christian fear is not slavish dread, but salutary filial awe. Christian humility is not a mean and dispiriting feeling, but a just sense of ourselves. Christian dependence is not inactive recumbence, but an habitual reference to the source of all good, compatible with the fullest exercise of all our active powers. Such a frame of mind is a Christian frame of mind, pleasing to God, happy as to ourselves, and beneficial to others.

Thus I have shown you what I think to be the wise and judicious course; of which, if you adopt it, you will receive the benefits in due time. Religion is perfection: perfection as to truth, life, and order. This cannot be denied: and therefore it must be perverse in any of us not to attend to that perfection, but to corrupt it or distort it by the errors of our minds, by the fervours of our hearts, by the vagaries of our imaginations, and by the irregularities of our conduct. Further, we are most happy and prosperous in religion, and we most adorn it and promote its interests, when we walk wisely, and carefully watch over our wayward hearts. It is only by attending to Wisdom that we shall inherit substance. Prov. viii. 21.

## THE COLLECT.

“O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Gracious Lord God, Thou knowest my weakness and perverseness, and how unable I am to proceed in a right path without Thy special grace. Thou hast in Thy great mercy brought me from a state of slavery and sin into the kingdom of Thy

dear Son. The light of day is around me: a region which it is delightful to contemplate lies before me. I am in many respects a new creature, in a new spiritual condition: but there are many seeds of evil within me. How, then, shall I conduct myself aright, advancing in prosperous piety, and adorning the Gospel? It is only by wisdom from above that I can be truly wise—only by power from above that I can be strong—only by Thy grace that I can rule myself, and act as a true disciple of the blessed Jesus. O merciful Father, perfect that good work which, I humbly trust, Thou hast begun in me. Keep me from a heedless and unreflecting mind, from vain talk, from foolish fancies, from imprudent conduct, and from a proud spirit. Make me thoughtful, cautious, and silent; sober, prudent, circumspect, and humble. Let me study, and pray, and strive to be such in all respects as I ought to be: and thus may I be a follower of Christ with wisdom and consistency, as well as with simplicity and sincerity of mind and heart, to Thy glory, the good of my own soul, and the benefit of others. O grant that I may duly improve Thy goodness to me, firmly persevering in substantial piety, that I may at all times bless and magnify Thee for Thy sustaining, controlling, and guiding power. Mercifully hear and answer my petitions, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

## REFLECTIONS ON PIETY.

“Not virtue's self is deified on earth ;  
Virtue has her relapses, conflicts, foes ;  
Foes, that ne'er fail to make her feel their hate.  
Virtue has her peculiar set of pains.  
True friends to virtue, last, and least, complain ;  
But if they sigh, can others hope to smile ?  
If wisdom has her miseries to mourn,  
How can poor folly lead a happy life?”—*Young.*

“Our Christian merchant labours. He prosecutes the dictates of spiritual wisdom, with a work of faith, and labour of love. It is not empty wishes, and velleities, yawning and drowsy desires, that can make a merchant or Christian rich: much pains must be taken with an evil heart, a sluggish spirit, a stubborn will, impetuous passions, and active enemies.”

*Bp. Reynolds.*

You may have observed, my young readers, that I address you in what may be called a cautionary method. I have been led to this from my experience of human life, and from the observations that I have made on what I have seen and heard. I rejoice to see feeling, courage, and decision shown by the pupils of divine truth: but if I see

these without calm thought and prudent calculation, my joy is diminished by painful fears and apprehensions. So far as any thing which I advance may, through God's blessing, influence your minds, hearts, and conduct, I would wish so to influence them, that you may have as few errors as possible to recant, few vagaries to lament, few steps to retrace.—I now suppose you to have entered on a pious course with reflection and decision. I suppose you to have entered into the spirit of my instructions, and to be desirous of being judicious young Christians, as well as real young Christians. I wish, therefore, in the present chapter, to state to you what you will find piety to be in progressive experience; and here it will not be difficult for me to say enough in a few words to prevent wrong expectations, and to encourage you in your righteous course.

1. Be not alarmed when I tell you that piety implies more or less of Suffering. We live in a sinful, and therefore in a suffering world. Never fancifully expect exemption from the common lot of our fallen humanity—from the common lot of the people of God. Examine the lives of the holy characters recorded in the Scriptures; of Noah, Daniel, and Job; of Moses, Samuel, and David; and you will find that they were no strangers to trials. Our heavenly Father deals out trials as He sees fit. Some are tried in body, some in mind, some in circumstances. "Many are the troubles

of the righteous." Remember, and study well, the first eleven verses of the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews.

2. Prepare to find piety a Warfare. If we be true Christians we are the soldiers of the Captain of our salvation. The world, with its riches, honours, cares, and vanities, is an enemy. Satan, with his fiery darts and cunning devices, is an enemy. The flesh, or our sinful nature, with its inordinate passions and appetites, is an enemy. There is such a thing as "the filthiness of the flesh," which would lead us to seek our happiness in what are called the pleasures of sense: and there is such a thing as "the filthiness of the spirit," which would lead us to cherish pride, ambition, covetousness, envy, and other unholy principles. Let us particularly remember—the besetting sin. Every one who knows himself, knows to what sin he is most prone; the Goliath among the Philistines. Here, then, we find hosts of enemies, visible and invisible, external and internal. Your happiness, honour, and welfare depend on your being conquerors—and this implies a valiant and persevering warfare.

3. Never forget that piety involves Activity. Undoubtedly piety is connected with the most sublime views, with a splendid imagination, and with exquisite feelings. There is no objection to these, if they be regulated by wisdom. There is no reason why you should be always amongst



clouds, and mire, and thorns: nay, there is every reason for the contrary. But always remember that piety is—a service. God has endowed us with various faculties, and entrusted various talents to our care. We, as true Christians, are sons and heirs, with peculiar privileges and prospects. Nevertheless we are servants, and under the strongest obligations to duty.

The duties of the Christian vary, as to particulars, according to his age, place, circumstances, and relations in life. All duty may be comprehended under these three general terms, Godliness, Sobriety, and Righteousness—terms which describe what we owe to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow creatures. Every one, even in the humblest station, can, with God's blessing, do far more good than is commonly conceived, if he understand the important art of laying himself out aright to do it. Some are too much satisfied with correct notions; some, with fine imaginations; some, with animated feelings; some, with good wishes: but what does Scripture say? "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

What an idea of piety have I put before you! Suffering, Warfare, Activity. Is there nothing that can be said to reconcile your minds to these things; nay, rather, to make you look upon them

with delight? If piety imply suffering, warfare, and activity, it also implies enjoyment the most pure, honours the most bright, and rewards the most glorious.

4. Remember that in piety you will find Substantial Enjoyment. The true Christian state is a state of peace with God. Having communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, being the temples of the Holy Ghost, blessed with a consciousness of the work of grace, of the divine life within you, and looking forward to an eternal and incorruptible inheritance, you will certainly have various measures of the purest and most exalted enjoyment that can be had in the present state.

I would not willingly write a sentence which your future experience will contradict: and therefore I cannot amuse or animate you with a delineation of enjoyment grounded on mere possibility. I look upon piety as divine: I look upon it as sober. A part of your sufferings, to which I have already referred, will be spiritual, and these imply a greater or less suspension of enjoyment, according to the common meaning of that term. But confining myself to a rather low standard of attainment, and making all allowances for spiritual trial and distress, I maintain that a life of piety is a life of much enjoyment.

You will have enjoyment on the Sabbath. It is the day of God: and if you be then especially with

Him, He will be then especially with you. In the house of God, and in the exercises of retirement, you will have those delights which will remind you of the eternal Sabbath for which you are preparing.

You will have enjoyment in the Scriptures. There you will be instructed, animated, comforted as you meditate on the counsels and on the ways of God; as you converse with patriarchs, apostles, and prophets; as you contemplate the glory of Christ, the riches of redemption, the grace of the Spirit, the nature of piety, and the prospects of futurity. The more you enter into the Scriptures, through the Holy Spirit, the greater happiness you will derive from them.

You will have enjoyment at the throne of grace. Amidst all the events of life, it will be delightful to you to pour out your hearts before Him who heareth prayer. Conscious of your sins, wants, and dangers, you will implore His mercy and grace: and conscious of His goodness to you, you will joyfully offer to Him your grateful praises. It will at all times give you joy, that you can approach your heavenly Father as children.

You will have enjoyment in the common course of life. Human life, whatever be said by the poet or the sage, is a plain thing; chiefly a recurring monotonous series of petty cares and humble services; a circle of mechanical operations. But piety ennobles life: for while the hands are busily

moulding material elements, the pious soul recognizes God and His will in all things. Religion cannot fail to give you elevated thoughts, holy feelings, and divine joys in the most humble post—in the most common occupation.

You will have enjoyment in solitude. Are you far from friends? Have you been deprived of them by death? In retirement, and in a desolate state, you cannot be alone: your God will be with you. Remember His most intimate presence to your souls, and loneliness will not be oppressive to you, and bereavement will lose much of its anguish. You will rejoice, though you walk over a desert: you will sing praises, though you are in a dungeon.

You will have enjoyment in distress. Religion is a faithful friend: she will never forsake you: and she will be nearest to you when other friends may be most distant from you. You will hear her voice, and feel her power, and receive her consolations, in the days of your greatest necessity. In the time of sickness, pain, and languor, in the sombre shades that mark the evening of life, and when death approaches, you will not be left comfortless. You will know where to look, and upon whom to depend.

You will have enjoyment as you anticipate eternity. Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, sanctified by His Spirit, and walking with God in holiness, obedience, and resignation, the unending

ages of an unchangeable eternity present to your undeceiving hope a day without clouds, joy without sorrow, bliss without bitterness, perfection without alloy.

To what, I ask, does the suffering, the warfare, the activity, the enjoyment of the true Christian lead? Let the words of our blessed Lord be the answer—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Surely it may now be said, that piety is "the whole of man"—his honour and happiness; the life, and safety, and blessedness, and perfection of the soul, amidst the changes of this mortal existence and the disclosures of eternity.

Thus I would call upon you, my young readers, to reflect on piety in the completeness that belongs to it. Cherish no fine fancies: rush into no extremes: but learn to consider things, as much as possible, such as they are; such as you will find and feel them. Suffer with patience, fight the good fight with courage, act with diligence, enjoy with gratitude. Then your happiness will abound—not the happiness of angels, unmingled and unceasing—but the happiness of true believers, always mingled, sometimes interrupted, but which ere long will be exchanged for the perfect felicity of heaven.

## THE COLLECT.

"O Almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Holy and Gracious God, help me to think with adoring joy and gratitude on Thy goodness towards me in making me spiritually acquainted with the Gospel of Christ. I might have still been a thoughtless trifler, living in sin, and enjoying the transitory pleasures of this world. But, O Lord, the desire of my soul is to Thee, and to the remembrance of Thy Name. O enable me to form just views of religion, and always to entertain them, that I may not wander and mistake, but proceed in the way of truth consistently and steadfastly. As I am called to suffer, let me not sink under any trial, but endure with patience. As the true Christian life is a warfare, may I resist every foe, and finally be more than conqueror. As I am called to activity, enable me to use all my time, powers, and talents faithfully in Thy service. As I am called to enjoyment, let me partake of the joys of religion with thankfulness. In all circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse in human view, let me be

fully persuaded that true piety is the glory and happiness of man; his life, peace, honour, and blessedness, through time and eternity: and grant that through Thy grace I may order my conversation in agreement with this persuasion. Let no enemy prevail against me. Let me be never improperly influenced by any thing that I hear. Enlightened in mind, and convinced in judgment, and knowing where my resources are, grant that I may always go forward in the divine life, abounding more and more in true excellence, both in the principles and in the fruits of unfeigned piety, to Thy honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## SEPARATION.

"A few forsake the throng ; with lifted eyes  
Ask wealth of Heaven, and gain a real prize,  
Truth, wisdom, grace, and peace, like that above,  
Sealed with His signet, whom they serve and love :  
Scorned by the rest, with patient hope they wait  
A kind release from their imperfect state,  
And unregretted are soon snatched away  
From scenes of sorrow into glorious day."—*Cowper.*

"Unreserved obedience is the only test of the power of true religion, and of the inward sanctification of the heart. Let not the world, and its crooked interests retain you within the unhallowed circle of its attractions. Beware lest your apparent policy and advantages cause you to walk in a different path from that which can alone lead you to heaven, through Him who is the way, and the truth, and the life."

*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

WHATEVER varieties of character exist among men, they are reducible to two classes; for all men are either godly or ungodly, holy or unholy, good or wicked, with true piety, or without: there is no third class: and these two classes are essentially distinct from each other, as to views, principles, feelings, objects, conduct, and end.



True piety produces a separation from the world. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Our baptismal engagement is to "renounce the world with its pomps and vanity." If we fulfil this engagement, we cannot be of the number of those, we cannot be the intimate associates of those, who love and pursue the world's pomp and vanity. Every true Christian performs his vow, through divine grace, and is consequently a separate character: he is in the world, but he is not of the world.

This subject demands wise and calm consideration. Some young converts are animated, courageous, decided: they easily cut through the knots which they cannot untie: they feel no difficulty in abandoning the world. They turn their backs upon them, and perhaps display something of a harsh and unsocial spirit. They inveigh against the world fluently and unsparingly. Their zeal, firmness, and good intentions are to be commended: but one would rejoice to see in them a little more reflection, gentleness, and candour. They seem to make separation too much a matter of locality. Their spirit is not yet an informed, subdued, and disciplined spirit.

Again, some young converts are constitutionally timid, shrinking, unwilling to offend any one. Although they see and feel what is right, they are

frequently too compliant, and join their friends and companions in pomps, vanities, and amusements which they in their consciences condemn. They have not courage to express their convictions, and to act according to their knowledge. Through want of fidelity to apprehend truth, they continue feeble in piety—like plants which are in a great measure deprived of light and air.

Further, some young persons see and admit the excellence and importance of religion, but they see no harm in joining with the world in their amusements, and in what are called innocent pleasures. They have no objection to be religious; but they have a strong objection to be *strict*. They have light in their minds—but what impression is made on their hearts? This mongrel sort of thing, religious profession and secular conformity,—this preposterous art of attempting to please God, the world, and ourselves,—is, it is to be feared, too prevalent amongst us. Such persons do not spiritually enter into the real nature of the moral elements of good and evil: they have religion without its power, and the world without its grossness. What is their state? Most perilous.

A true Christian is not of the world; for to be of the world is not to be a true Christian. Divine grace is an enlightening, enlivening, and separating principle. But it is by no means an easy thing to give minute directions on this subject. It is evident, from what has been already said, that

a zealous Christian rushes to one extreme, and a timid Christian to another. The desirable point is—to act in all things with thought, wisdom, and discretion, and to be true to the light and grace which God has bestowed. This, however, may be explicitly maintained—the separation of a true Christian from the world will be twofold; a separation as to the cherished frame of mind and heart, and a separation with respect to the practical life.

As to the former of these, if the kingdom of God, which is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” be established in any soul, it will have those views, principles, and affections which are not known by a soul in which that kingdom is not established. Of necessity, therefore, and in the very nature of the case, a pious soul is separate in its settled and habitual frame from a soul which is not pious. The subject admits of very plain illustration. What similarity is there between the highly cultivated mind of an accomplished sage and the mind of an unlettered savage? What similarity is there between a refined taste that delights in the vast and bright and beautiful and orderly, and a vulgar taste that is not in the least degree offended with irregularity, deformity, and meanness? There is none, you say: they are similar agents in such dissimilar circumstances, that they must be regarded as distinct agents—most widely separated from each other. Still less similarity, then, is there between a soul

that is animated by celestial fire and life, and a soul that is an utter stranger to those sacred elements.

But the inward separation will produce an external and visible separation. The conduct of a man will be in agreement with his principles. If your lovely flowers had the power of choice and motion, would they go and select their companions from weeds and brambles? I advocate nothing that is crude, vehement, and rash—however fairly any thing of the sort might admit of an apology. As to the timid Christian, his weakness in the faith is to be lamented: and he is a subject of anxiety to every feeling mind, lest he should smother the celestial fire by secular rubbish. As to those who deliberately attempt to mix religion and the world, and to reconcile them with each other, they can only be viewed as melancholy characters in perilous and awful circumstances. They know and are convinced, that the hills and vales and streams of Canaan are the best inheritance: but they are so carnal and terrene, that they desire to have the pleasures and delights of Egypt, and call in the aid of an ingenious, specious, and deceitful logic to justify their conduct in opposition to their better views and convictions.

The true Christian takes up his cross daily, and follows Christ. Hence he is separate from those who make this world there portion, and who make the common maxims of men their rules. This is

the fruit of divine grace: and as that grace has made him separate, it is his duty to keep himself separate. Circumstances, as they are favourable or unfavourable, will have considerable influence. If he be surrounded with pious persons, he will find no difficulty. If his relations, friends, and companions be averse to religion, and account it almost any thing but what it really is, much difficulty may be experienced, at least for a season: and in this case great firmness, prudence, caution, and patience will be necessary. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Separation from the world, in order that we may be faithful to religion, useful in society, and prosperous in our own souls, must go thus far—Separation from all that is in its own nature sinful—from all, whether persons, things, or pursuits, that sanctions those things which would lead ourselves or others into evil. Christian morality cannot be satisfied with less than this: and unless we observe it, we act inconsistently. True Christians are peculiarly the property of God, and are bound by duty, love, and gratitude to honour Him. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The true Christian wants no subtle and elaborate reasoning about the moral character of objects

and pursuits. His casuistry is very simple, concise, and solid. "I cannot do what is displeasing to God. I cannot love and pursue what is contrary to the sublime and holy spirit of the gospel. I cannot sanction what is ruinous to the souls of my fellow creatures. I have in my baptism vowed allegiance to Christ—I have renewed those vows—and it is my duty, happiness, and honour, to walk, as far as possible, even as He walked."

Separation from the world, when it is mild, prudent, decided, consistent, free from passion, obstinacy, and self-will, is a noble and exalted attainment, and amply rewards its possessor for all he has suffered in acquiring it, by the happiness with which it is attended. The temporizing Christian cannot be a happy Christian. All inconsistency produces a diminution of happiness. A temporizer displeases God, his own conscience, serious Christians, and the very world whose favour he seeks. Confess Christ before men in a consistent manner: opposition, if it be experienced, will soon cease; the excellence of your character will be admitted and admired; and some of those who opposed you may be induced by your example, through the divine grace, to seek that piety which has made you what you are.

To aim at reconciling religion and the world, is to tamper with conscience, to deaden the moral feelings, to dally with the serpent, to reason away convictions, to oppose the Holy Spirit. "How

shall I be more separate from the world? How shall I be more entire in religion?" These are the only questions that deserve your consideration.

Separate from the world in their sins and follies, be separate from them in your spirit. If you be proud, selfish, morose, vain, discontented, envious, uncharitable—in what respects are you better than the world whom you condemn. A local separation, if there be not a spiritual, is but of little value.

You must have intercourse with the world, for your business here is with human beings. Religion is holy: it is likewise social. Be separate from the world, and yet be among the world. Be in the stream, and yet be not carried away by it. Be living and manifest witnesses of truth and holiness in a world that abounds with error and sin. Keep the mind sedate, the heart calm, the tongue bridled, the conduct correct, social without levity, and pious without gloom and moroseness. It is easy, my young readers, to give directions: you will be happy in proportion as you conform to them: to realize much of this excellence requires large measures of grace, great watchfulness and self-discipline.

As to worldly company, you cannot, as true Christians, seek it: do not morosely shun it. Be not unsocial: but on no occasion heedlessly throw yourselves into dangerous circumstances. You

may do good in worldly company; but, without much care, it will do you great harm. On this point, be guided by duty, not by mere feeling. As men of different political views only meet together on certain well understood conditions, so should the followers of Christ let it be clearly known, that, in going into worldly company, when duty requires it, they have their conditions. The maintaining of a pious dignity will do much as to this matter.

On the subject of amusements and conformity to the world I refer you to the appendix.—In conclusion, then, the true Christian is separate from the world by the operation of divine grace; and it is his duty, making the word of God his teacher and guide, to keep himself separate, or as St. James expresses it, “unspotted from the world.” As to numberless particulars, he must be left to decide for himself. If he rightly remember the supreme authority of his divine Master, and what he owes to religion, to the Church, to the world, and to himself; if he consult wisdom and prudence, and consider the probable result of his conduct, as well as present circumstances; he will not widely err. He will be separate: and he may look with gratitude and joy to that animating and consolatory assurance—“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye



shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

THE COLLECT.

"Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O Blessed Lord God, I thank and praise Thee for the knowledge which Thou hast given me of divine things, and for every right disposition of heart which thou hast wrought in me towards them. Increase that knowledge, I humbly beseech Thee, and strengthen those dispositions, that as, by Thy mercy and grace, I am separated from the world, so I may continue separate, and live consistently with my Christian character, to the glory of Thy Name, and to the benefit of my fellow creatures. Enlisted under the banner of Christ, may I be enabled to acquit myself as one of His faithful soldiers and servants all my days. Inspire my heart with courage and firmness, with wisdom and discretion, with love and meekness, that I may be true to Thy word and to my own

conscience, and also be preserved from those improprieties which would bring discredit on religion and injure myself. If the world allure me, let me not fall a victim to any of its seducing arts. If the world oppose me, grant that I may be firm and faithful in the holy cause of divine truth. Thy goodness to me has been great: O continue that goodness; and so inspire me with strength from above, that I may be wholly thine, and in all circumstances, and at all times, conduct myself as one of those whom Thou hast set apart for Thyself. Thou knowest my weakness, folly, and corruption: O let Thy good Spirit be ever with me more and more, that as I advance in years I may be more separate from all below, and be more entirely Thine. Strengthened by Thy might, and guided by Thy word, grant that I may be always a true and faithful follower of our Blessed Saviour; to whom, with Thee, and with the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all honour and glory world without end. Amen.

## FRAME OF SPIRIT.

“ There are in this loud stunning tide  
Of human care and crime,  
With whom the melodies abide  
Of th' everlasting chime ;  
Who carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet,  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”  
*Christian Year.*

“ If we do not live for God in our religion, we must live outwardly, and so shall endeavour to make a fair show in the flesh : but if we have His presence indeed, the truest part of our life will be hidden, and we shall much and gladly retire within to enjoy it . . . . We shall aim, through grace, to be gracious, rather than to appear so.”—*Ambrose Serle.*

HAVING stated in the preceding chapter the nature of Christian Separation, I shall pursue the same subject through this and the following chapter, and set before you the frame of spirit which you are to cultivate, and the exhibition of piety which you are to make, as the peculiar, distinct, or separate people of Christ—in the world but not of the world.

The careful cultivation and maintenance of the Christian frame of spirit is a matter of the highest importance. Few things are more difficult: but much here may depend on constitution, education, and previous habits. The spirit of human nature and the spirit of the gospel are different things. But I cannot enter here into a prolix examination of particulars. It will be sufficient for me to advance so much on the subject as will enable you to prosecute it to whatever extent you please with an immediate reference to yourselves.

As a general remark, it may be observed, that the true Christian spirit is a crucified spirit. It essentially implies a self-renunciation—a mortification of our own self-will. There is in it a chastening, curbing, restraining, controlling, denying of our inward selves. This is necessary until we are made perfect above. There is always so much of the old Adam within us, that it requires an effort of self-denial to yield ourselves as we ought to the government of our new nature. You are, spiritually viewed, compound beings, and the prosperity of the spiritual mind very much depends on the crucifixion of the carnal mind.—This being premised, I observe,

1. That the true Christian spirit is an humble spirit. We are naturally proud. We may even think, in our proud moments, that our goodness is a ground for our esteeming ourselves and despising others. Painful and inconsistent conduct! “Be

ye clothed with humility." Crush thy pride. Always remember what sinful, feeble, and imperfect creatures you are; that you have nothing but what you have received from above; that your attainments are comparatively nothing. Always consider how hateful pride is in the sight of God. Meditate on the mind, the humble mind, that was in Christ Jesus. Further, I remark,

2. That the true Christian spirit is meek and gentle. Some persons have a natural mildness of character; and they may need exhortations to firmness and decision. But haste, quickness, impetuosity, asperity are more common characteristics of our nature. In a religious character, boldness, roughness, positiveness, obstinacy are very offensive, and are proofs of an unsubdued and undisciplined spirit. Let allowance be made for constitution, habits, and so forth; but meekness and gentleness are to be highly valued and carefully cultivated. He who is naturally irritable has great need to watch over himself. Our Messias Lord was "meek and lowly in heart." You dislike a rough spirit in others: beware of it in yourselves. The Christian character should be attractive: the soft graces of the gospel shed upon it that emerald-lustre which renders it so. Again, let me say,

3. That the Christian spirit is benevolent. Let charity, as mild and pure as heaven's sunshine, glow and beam in your words and actions. A

cold and narrow spirit, unkind, sarcastic, censorious;—frigid parsimony in relieving distress;—harsh and unsparring remarks or decisions respecting others;—guard most carefully against every thing of this sort. Can the myrtle become a thorn, or the dove a vulture, or a lamb a savage tiger? Beware of all such inconsistency. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” “Love the brotherhood.” Be benevolent in heart and conduct to all. Crucify every malevolent feeling of the natural heart. I must also maintain,

4. That the Christian spirit is forgiving. Unkind actions, words, and measures will sometimes try your temper. They naturally lead to anger, revenge, retaliation. The true Christian must not act on such principles. “Father, forgive them”—was the petition of Jesus on the Cross, even for His murderers: and can His followers hesitate for a moment to forgive those who offend them? If we do not from the heart forgive all who offend us, a miserable portion of the old leaven remains in our bosoms. Let love be empress of the heart; and all injuries will be forgiven and forgotten. Further, be it noticed,

5. That the Christian spirit is patient. You will experience the perverseness of different sorts of persons. Your plans may be opposed, and your designs frustrated. You may have to contend with pride, or ignorance, or malice, or self-will, or prejudice, or with other corrupt passions. Such

circumstances are apt to produce a sad commotion in the breast. Keep your hearts with diligence in the moment of trial. Let patience have its perfect work. The lovely plant was beaten by the storm: it waved about and trembled as in distress: but it stood in its own mild serenity: and when the storm was over, it appeared altogether uninjured, and shone with a brighter lustre than before. Be mild and patient while the hurricane of passion rages around you: then it will do you no harm: and when it has subsided, a brighter light of celestial beauty will rest upon you. Let it also be observed,

6. That the Christian spirit is sedate. Religion acts both upon the mind and heart: but the mind ought to be the leading power in man. We admire a calm and thinking person; and we often censure those who suffer themselves to be hurried along by their feelings and passions. A sober, reflecting, deliberating mind, which has solid reasons for what it adopts and rejects, is unspeakably valuable and highly ornamental. It gives stability, respectability, and dignity to the religious character. Feelings are often the parents of a numerous family of absurdities. A sedate person rules his feelings, and follows the guidance of his judgment. This particular branch of the Christian frame of spirit especially demands the attention of persons of naturally ardent dispositions. We see nothing but calmness, sedateness, and correctness in the spirit

of our blessed Lord.—It must also be maintained,

7. That the Christian spirit is a resigned spirit. If a young person yield to fancy and feeling, he may begin to compare his own lot with that of others; and then he will probably complain, that he does not enjoy what many young persons enjoy, and that his circumstances are unfavourable to his being so good or so useful as he might be. There lies at the bottom of this a mixture of discontent and of unmortified self-will. This is to be guarded against. A wise and gracious God gives each his portion here; fixes the bounds of his habitation; places him in what condition He sees fit. If you have not the real or apparent advantages that some have, you have not their trials, dangers, and annoyances. If you have certain evils to bear and to contend with, (and no station is exempt from what we call evils,) bear them as a cross—improve them as a discipline. Learn to be thankful alike for your blessings and for your trials. Honour God in your circumstances, and He will honour you. Will He not most largely bless those who cheerfully submit to His dispensations towards them?—once more, be it observed,

8. That the Christian spirit is a heavenly frame of mind. “To be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Our treasure, if we be true Christians, is above—and there too our thoughts and affections ought to be—will be. Inculcate here no fervour,



fancy, or irregular movement of the soul ; but that frame of it which is the result of sanctified views and feelings. Where this is, there will be a subordination of all earthly things—there will be a delight in, and a mingling with, and a cleaving to, and a resting upon things invisible, divine, immutable, eternal, infinite. Ah ! my young readers, did we duly remember the presence of God, the love of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, the glory of heaven, the hatefulness of sin, that holiness in which the perfection of the soul consists,—we should be heavenly in our frame of mind, our piety would be felt by others, and we should be exalted and happy in ourselves. To talk of religion, and to profess it are easy things ; but to be spiritually religious—to have religion, and to keep it, as the life of our life, as the spring of spiritual movements and feelings—is not an easy thing. What prayer, meditation, and circumspection are essential to the attainment and preservation of a pure, noble, and happy piety !

Let these few observations suffice.—The greatest importance is to be attached to plain, sound, and pure views of scriptural truth : but the greatest importance is also to be attached to spiritual and practical godliness—to a conformity of heart and conduct with the spirit and laws of the gospel. Our views, however correct they may be, are no further rightly improved by us, than as they lead to the vital and practical result. A mere doctrinal

Christian is only a person of notions. A mere practical Christian is only a person of mechanism. Who, then, is the true Christian? The vital, holy, spiritual Christian, whose mind is instructed by divine truth, whose heart is renewed by divine power, and whose conduct is regulated by the divine law.

I would again remind you, my young readers, that the due maintenance of the Christian frame of spirit is a very difficult part of piety. It is comparatively easy to learn what is true, and to do what is useful and correct: but to maintain, (sinful and worldly and feeble beings as we are, and surrounded as we are with a noisy, seducing, and perplexing world,) a truly Christian frame of mind and heart, humble, meek, charitable, forgiving, patient, sedate, resigned, and heavenly,—this is the labour, this is the task. This excellence, however, is not only desirable, but essential. This is the kingdom of God in the soul. By cherishing and cultivating this spirit, you will adorn religion, silence gainsayers, overcome opponents, comfort and benefit your fellow Christians, and enjoy the purest happiness in your own souls. The more heavenly your spirit is, the more meet you will be for heaven. Many of us have knowledge; and many of us do much that is laudable: but, alas! how few of us excel in the Christian spirit; in that interior piety, in that spirituality and life of thought and feeling, which prove that our souls

move in that elevated sphere which is filled with the holy elements of the celestial regions! O gracious God, we fall in the dust before Thy footstool, and are filled with shame and self-reproach.

#### THE COLLECT.

“O Lord, from whom all good things do come; grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

#### THE PRAYER.

O Merciful and Gracious God, the more I meditate upon sacred things, the more I see of their excellence and beauty : but I also see how contrary they are to the sinful nature of man. Thy grace, however, is sufficient to overcome the perverseness of the human heart. Daily grant me, I beseech Thee, fresh supplies of Thy heavenly grace, that I may be a Christian not only in name, and by my profession of Thy truth, but in the settled and habitual frame of my soul in Thy sight. Let that mind be in me which was in Christ Jesus. Let the spirit of the gospel be my spirit. Make me humble, meek, benevolent, forgiving, patient, calm, submissive, resigned, and heavenly. Thus let me happily experience, and make it evident, that the kingdom of God is within me. Thus let me be a

new creature in Christ—new in the principles, affections, and operations of my heart. O enable me thus to adorn the Gospel for the benefit of others, while I also enjoy the true blessedness which it gives to its faithful disciples. Thou knowest, O Lord, the corruption and weakness of my nature, and the number, arts, and powers of my enemies. Mercifully perfect that which concerneth me : forsake not the work of Thine own hands : but grant that I may daily grow in grace, and flourish and abound more and more in the virtues of the Christian character. On Thee, O Lord, I depend : to Thee I look : and I beseech Thee to grant, of Thy great goodness and tender compassion, that I may prosper in the spiritual life. pass unhurt through the trials and evils of this mortal state, and continually become more meet for the perfect felicity above through eternal ages. Thus be with me, and bless me, O gracious Father, for the sake of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## EXHIBITION OF PIETY.

"Talk not of talents :—what hast thou to do ?

Thy Duty—be thy portion *five or two* :

Talk not of talents :—is thy Duty done ?

Thou hadst sufficient—were they *ten or one*.

Lord, what *my* talents are I cannot tell,

Till Thou shalt give me grace to use them well :

That grace impart—the bliss will then be mine,

But all the power and all the glory thine."

*J. Montgomery.*

"The entire conversion of the heart discharges not the Christian from the fulfilment of social and relative obligations. It will not bury him in a cloister; nor make him flee like Elijah to the desert. It will, however, assuredly require, that his employments should be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. It does enjoin that his conversation should be in heaven; and that his eye should be fixed with singleness of aim upon the prize of his high calling of God in Christ, Jesus."—*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

As the subject of the last chapter had a primary reference to yourselves, the subject of this may be viewed as having a primary reference to others. As true Christians, you are to demean yourselves in a truly Christian manner towards all men.

Some young Christians, more zealous than wise, more vehement than prudent, more decided than kind, seem disposed to disregard those persons who do not enter into their views and feelings; and they reserve their love, esteem, and confidence for those who think and feel as they themselves think and feel. They stand as it were upon an elevation, see in a new light, inhale a purer atmosphere, and look down with indifference or dislike upon those who are yet in the misty valley—the majority of the human family. This, however, is a sad abuse of the divine goodness. Surely such individuals do not know of what spirit they are. I hope, my young readers, that you will lament to see any thing of this sort, and most cautiously guard against it yourselves.

Let the principles and laws of the Gospel rule you in your conduct towards your parents, towards your connexions and former companions, towards those whom we designate the world, and towards servants and inferiors. A few remarks on these particulars must suffice: they will show you that you are debtors “both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.” As you have light, so must that light shine for the benefit of others.

1. Be submissive, affectionate, and dutiful towards your parents. We are naturally more or less self-willed and impatient of control. We wish to act according to our own inclination, and re-

straint is irksome. But it is the duty of us all to be submissive to lawful authority; and in a peculiar manner it is the duty of children to be submissive to parental authority. That single sentence respecting our blessed Saviour,—“and was subject unto them”—is as it were an invaluable volume to a reflecting mind. If a child assume to himself an independence of spirit, and betray an impatience of just control, it is a proof, whatever he may profess, that his views and feelings are very defective—very perverse.

If your parents be pious, they may have some peculiarities of sentiment or of conduct which you do not altogether approve. They do not go so far as you wish, or their views are not plainly and simply scriptural. They are advanced in life, and have about them some of the peculiarities of a gone-by day, which are not altogether pleasing to your modern taste. They have a few of those odd things which you call whims, fancies, or eccentricities. At times they are rather cross, peevish, arbitrary. Now supposing that something of this sort may exist, you may be occasionally discomposed by them, be inclined to censure, to laugh, to criticise, to condemn them. Check such feelings in a moment: remember the sacred character that they sustain: bear patiently with them: cast the mantle of love over every fault. Revere them; love them; do not contradict them; do not irritate them; do not put yourselves in the chair of judg-

ment upon them. Demean yourselves towards them in all respects, and that with a willing heart, as dutiful and affectionate children.

If your parents be not pious, the case is different—but your duty is the same. God has put a difference between you and them. You cannot arrogate any thing to yourselves. But the spiritual relation between God and you does not affect the natural relation between your parents and you:—in fact, it only requires you to be more loving, dutiful, attentive, submissive, acting from new principles and by a new law. In public, in the family, in private conversation, make it evident that you feel as children ought to feel, and that religion only renders you more alive to your duty, and more careful to perform it. If at any time they oppose you, require what you do not like, or impose some unwelcome restraint, let not this lead to any violation of duty on your part. They do not see as you see, or feel as you feel. As by opposition you would do an injury to them, to yourselves, and to religion, so by obedience and the maintenance of a proper disposition, you may promote their good, and you will certainly promote your own: your character will shine in that beauty which it always ought to reflect.

It is a painful sight to see any child, and more especially a child professing godliness, displaying any thing like insubordination, pride, self-will, superciliousness, or pertness towards a parent.



The parental relation is peculiarly sacred in the eye of God—it ought to be so in yours. You may have much to bear, much to try you ; but this is a call to duty—to self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

2. Act rightly towards all your connexions and former companions. I will suppose them not to be pious, and that you are not inclined to adopt half-measures. You will be disposed to act promptly and decidedly ; to follow your feelings ; to turn round ; to enter into a new path ; to separate yourself from your gay and thoughtless associates. I would even here inculcate reflection and prudence. Be patient, deliberate, calm : make a distinction between persons and things. Let your character be known, as being Christian. Let it be known, that, in the strength of divine grace, you will strive to form your life, not on the maxims and manners of the world, but by the principles and laws of the gospel. But while you abandon every vanity, there is no reason why you should abjure the society of relatives, friends, and companions, unless they act towards you in a very unreasonable manner. Show to all persons that religion is at the same time holy and heavenly, social and friendly. You may have an opportunity of explaining your views, principles, and reasons, which the candid will hear and examine. If you be heard, one point is gained : if, through divine grace, your example be followed, another point is

gained. If you be not heard, if you be laughed at, you will have no room for painfully reflecting on your own conduct: you did what you could to win souls. But recollect this, you need not renounce your gay companions; for if you be open and consistent, they will either soon tread in your steps, or they will renounce you.

"I cannot go there—I cannot associate with such persons—I shall have no pleasure, no comfort there—I shall be very glad to return." All this may be very true: but, I ask, how much is there of self-will and self-pleasing, of folly and weakness, in it? Most certainly you are not to throw yourselves in a heedless manner into company that is unpleasant from its secular spirit and conduct: but if, in the way of duty and of respect, it be proper that you should go into it, you undoubtedly have no business to keep from it. Such a visit is not pleasant: but are we only to consult our own pleasure? If you go where duty and propriety lead you, keeping your heart with great care, and looking to the Source of strength, you will go no where without either receiving good, or doing good; or both.

Remember the example of our blessed Lord. He certainly did not morosely shun the society of sinners. "Upright souls," says an old writer; "strive as much to imitate Christ as to enjoy him: and they practise Imitation in order to Fruition. We cannot hope to have our passage through the

world sweetened with the presence of Christ, unless we learn to be as He was in the world." But,

3. Act as true Christians towards those who are called the world. How others think and speak of religion is no primary concern of yours: your business is to behave towards all persons as young Christians ought; so that, in spite of their prejudices and aversions, they may be compelled to admire your spirit and conduct. "O, he is a mere worldling, a mere man of the world—very moral perhaps—but he knows nothing about religion." Something of this sort is often said: and then no attention or kindness is shown to such a person. Nay, it may be accounted a sort of virtue to keep aloof from him. "He that winneth souls is wise. God has been gracious to you, or you would now be of the number of those whom you despise. God has been gracious to you; and it is your duty so to order your conversation, that, as far as in you lies, others may seek the participation of the same grace. "Honour all men." Show that you respect all men in their respective ranks and stations. Show that you would gladly promote their happiness. Every thing that would lead men to suppose that you admire yourselves and despise others, is to be carefully avoided. It is in its own nature altogether unchristian; and in its effects it is most injurious. Maintain, and that most sacredly, the integrity of the Christian character: and demonstrate to all reasonable persons,

that pride and self-admiration, that censoriousness and moroseness, do not belong to the real Christian. Imitate Him who causes the rain to fall, and the sun to shine, upon the just and upon the unjust. Further,

4. Act as true Christians towards servants and inferiors. Your profession of religion will be known: your conduct will be closely inspected; and by none more closely than by those whom I have now mentioned. Are servants around you? You have an opportunity of inviting them to become the servants of Christ. When they see the good and delightful influence of religion on their young master or young mistress, you may, by God's blessing, bring them to the knowledge of the way of life. If you be kind, gentle, affable, condescending, your character will exert a beneficial influence on all around you. Once more,

5. Act in a becoming manner towards erring, feeble, or mistaken Christians. You may find some Christians who, from the weakness of their minds, or defective education, or warm fancies, hold some odd notions, or speak or act in what you account a strange manner. You may observe far more painful cases—those who have stumbled, or even fallen, in their Christian course—having been guilty of some gross inconsistency. As to the former, remember that the gem may be brilliant, though it be lodged in a grotesque or homely casket. It may be of inestimable worth, though

it has not been cut and polished with exquisite skill. As to the latter case, be thoughtful, patient, and humble. Remember those words of Scripture. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." In this case some persons show great severity, and seem more ready to give up the offender as lost, than to aim at his recovery. This is unchristian conduct. So far as you can, promote the recovery of the fallen Christian: at any rate, improve his misconduct. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

From these few remarks, you will see, my young readers, the necessity of looking into the world around you, and of reflecting in a sober and serious manner on your various duties—on what you owe to all men. While you live for your own salvation, you will live for the salvation of others. In order to lead a truly Christian life, something more is necessary than warmth and decision—even that wisdom which leads you to reflect on your relations and duties in life; on your talents and circumstances; and which urges you to attend to them in a practical manner. If you would enjoy the consolations of the gospel, you must bear the yoke of the gospel.

## THE COLLECT.

"Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Holy and Blessed God, while I see that salvation is entirely the gift of divine mercy and the work of divine grace; while I look solely to Christ, and rely upon the continued agency of the Holy Spirit; let me never be forgetful of the service which Thou requirest at my hands. Let me delight in Thy law, and always make it the rule of my conduct. Impress upon my heart, I beseech Thee, a due sense of what I owe to all around me—to my parents, relations, superiors, equals, and inferiors: and grant that I may in every respect demean myself towards them according to the requirements of Thy holy word. Let me never entertain the thought, that piety justifies my trampling on lawful authority, or my acting disrespectfully towards any person, whoever he may be. If any are perverse, harsh, and unkind in their language or conduct towards me, grant me grace to possess my soul in patience. If any are in error, or abuse Thy goodness, let me pity them,

and pray for them. Let it be seen in all my conduct, that I regard Thee and Thy holy word, and that I study to act in agreement with Thy will. Enable me to consider and to own the claims of all, and cheerfully to act under a due sense of them, that I may adorn religion, enjoy Thy presence and favour, and have true satisfaction and peace in my own soul. Grant this, I beseech Thee, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Advocate. Amen.

## THE CHRISTIAN CONFIRMED IN HIS CHOICE.

"A Christian dwells, like Uriel, in the sun ;  
Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight ;  
And ardent hope anticipates the skies."—*Young*.

"As soon as an alarm is given, I cast my eye over the leading *evidences* of the Scriptures . . . I likewise contemplate *facts* and *experience* . . . . and soon obtain repose. Like a man who is told that the foundation of his house is in danger, I call for the key of the vaults on which my dwelling stands. I light a candle, walk down stairs, and pass very deliberately through the arches : I examine very particularly the arch suspected ; and after having satisfied myself, that the foundation remains perfectly safe, I walk up again, lock the door, hang up the key, put out the candle, and quietly go about my business, saying as I go—They may raise an alarm, but I find all is safe."—*Cecil*.

SUPPOSING you, my young readers, to be established in piety, I cannot be blind to the fact, that you will be exposed to various trials of which at present you have no conception. It is therefore, a matter of great importance, that you should be fully convinced of the excellence of your choice, so that you may be completely persuaded in your



own minds, that you have every reason, whatever may occur, to proceed in your righteous course, through divine grace, with steadfast hearts and with unwearied feet.—Here, then, let me suggest a few thoughts, which, if duly improved, may induce you to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of soul through all the changes of this mortal life.

1. Be fully persuaded that the foundation of your faith is firm. Those who are hostile to the gospel, and indifferent about spiritual things, insinuate, or openly assert, the equality of all religions, and consequently that it is impossible to know what religion to choose. This is overthrowing Christianity at once. I have not spoken in this work on the subject of Evidence: but I would here observe, that it may be useful, if you have time, talents, and opportunity, to read some work on Evidences. As real believers, you do not want this for yourselves, since the divine work of the gospel on your own souls is to you a proof of its divine origin—you have the witness in yourselves. Can the book that has brought salvation to your souls, that has raised you from death to life, from slavery to liberty, from earth to heaven, be a human fabrication? Undoubtedly it cannot. But to guard you against the sophistry of vain persons, it may be well for you to see that Christians believe in what rests upon clear, strong, and manifold evidence. You will find, on thought and inquiry, that you ought never to be in the slightest

degree affected by the bold and rash assertions of the sceptic. The speculations of science respecting our globe—the history of the human species—the traditions and customs of all nations—all sound investigations of the moral world—the analogy between the constitution of things and the doctrines of revelations—miracles—the fulfilment of prophecy—the moral character and operations of revelation—in a word, the whole world without, and the whole world within, declare, with a voice that cannot but be heard by all, excepting those who are wilfully deaf, that the Bible is from God. The more you study this subject, the more clearly will you see, and the more powerfully will you be convinced, in the joy and gratitude of your hearts, that the believer has ample evidence for those truths on which he builds his eternal hopes. It is not for us to say by what unhappy process, mental and moral, the sceptic, who proudly boasts of reason, is led to believe that that book is false which has the strongest and most accumulated evidence of being true. It is certainly difficult to reconcile such disbelief with any thing that deserves to be called reason: nor can the disciple, or rather the victim, of it be entitled to much attention. He may excite in us feelings of astonishment and sorrow: but we must be weak, if he have any power to shake our faith in revelation. Make a right use of your faculties: and as you admit that truth is the mind of God, so you will admit that

the mind of God is deposited in the Scriptures, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

2. Be fully persuaded that the spiritual reception of the gospel in the riches of its mercy, in the powers of its grace, and in the holiness of its practical requirements, is the only saving reception of it. It is the proud boast of many, who admit the truth of revelation, that they are *rational* Christians: and it is their calumny against those whom they are pleased to denominate Evangelicals, or Methodists, or Calvinists, that they are irrational Christians—strict, excessive, fanciful. But never shrink for a moment at being accounted irrational for believing what the Bible reveals, for seeking what the Bible offers, and for doing what the Bible enjoins. Assume that the Bible is from God; and it follows, that he acts most truly as a rational and intelligent creature, who forms his mind, heart, and life by the Bible;—not he who bends and modifies revelation according to his own will. If God be our Teacher, it is rational to hear Him: if God be our Lawgiver, it is rational to obey Him;—understanding here by the word rational, that which is conformable to right reason. There are those who idolize what they call Reason: but the true and right Reason, and the blind, erring, and perverted reason of separate individuals, are very different things; exactly as the holy God and corrupted man are different beings. The true Christian submits to God; and he is the truly rational

person. I plead for no extreme notions—for nothing excessive. Let us attend to true reason; and then we shall receive divine truth as it is revealed to us, and seek the divine gifts which are offered to us, and walk according to divine rules. If we do not thus attend to the gospel we may boast of our reason: but we have the greatest cause to be ashamed of such boasting: for the awful fact is, that under the pretext of reason we are rejecting reason and revelation, to our complete undoing. True and sound reason teaches us, that unless we so embrace the gospel as to be blessed in our souls by it, we do not embrace it—we only profess it and talk about it—and the great point, as to our salvation, is not *profession*, but *possession*.

3. Be fully persuaded in your own minds as to the reality and wisdom of true piety. You may hear it said, that serious Christians are the mere creatures of fancy and feeling. This insinuation is as much directed against the Gospel as against its faithful disciples: but as to the former, it is blasphemy; as to the latter, it is calumny. It means to say, in plain words, that the Bible is not the wisdom of God; and that those who regard it as such are the dupes of the imagination and the heart. I suppose you to be fully satisfied, from your experience and from inquiry, that the Bible is from God. It follows, then, that those who receive it as such have a better guide than fancy and

feeling. I admit that we may mingle too much of our feelings and fancies with divine truth; but this furnishes no ground for a sweeping censure on the Christian character; for questioning the wisdom, judgment, and reflection of those who study to receive and hold the truth in a pure manner. The doctrines of the Bible are truth; and to receive them in their purity is man's real wisdom. Again, the operations of those doctrines in enlightening the mind, in renewing the heart, and in governing the life, are a reality. How these things may be abused by some individuals, is not the question: but this can be said, and it is all that needs be said, Sound Christians know the principles, reasons, motives, objects, and aims that influence their conduct; and they can reason as acutely, deeply, and justly on the nature of things, on the constitution of man both physical and moral, and on the nature and design of religion, as their opponents can. It is true, they are not cold, but fervent; not torpid, but zealous; and this is an excellence. Why should not a Christian be as fervent and zealous in the ways of God, as a man of the world is in the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, honour, or amusement? As to yourselves, your consciousness that you do not act from blind impulse, but from knowledge and reason; that you are not governed by imagination, but by wise and well-defined rules; will enable you to disregard the idle and empty declamation of vain persons.

4. Be fully persuaded that the true Christian enjoys the purest and largest happiness. You may hear it observed, that "these over-much righteous people undervalue the present, and deprive themselves of those enjoyments which are the birthright of man." This implies that religion has few or no pleasures, that futurity is a secondary concern, and that our chief happiness is from the world. Such an idea is absurd, unjust, altogether false. For, 1. The ways of wisdom are "ways of pleasantness:" and, 2. Eternity is certainly a matter of primary concern, to which all transitory things ought to be subjected: and, 3. The chief happiness of man cannot be derived from the world, because man is a spiritual being, and unless he be happy in his soul, which he can only be from God, he is a miserable creature, however he may enjoy the pleasures of sense, of taste, of intellect, or of fancy. There may be some Christians who morosely scorn all enjoyment, and make asceticism a virtue. Supposing these to be wrong, as I think they are, yet they act a part far more rational than the self-indulgent worldling. But a wise Christian does not undervalue the present; nor does he deprive himself any thing that would give him real happiness. He inverts the order of the worldly man, regarding the soul more than the body, the future world more than the present, and eternity more than time. He rejects what the world call happiness, because it is inconsistent with his future wel-

fare; and the world reject the happiness of religion, because it is not compatible with their present delights. The case then amounts to this—the worldly man has not the pleasures of religion, but he has the pleasures of the world; and these are all that he has: but the Christian has the true enjoyment of religion and also the true enjoyment of the world; for though he rejects what most desire and pursue, he has all the enjoyment of temporal things that is consistent with his real good; which is the true enjoyment of them. You are, therefore, compelled to conclude, that the true Christian is the happy man, or, if you prefer the expression, has the largest measure of enjoyment. Once more,

5. Be fully persuaded that the true disciple of Christ will never repent of his choice. That choice is a wise choice which will always give the mind satisfaction on the review of it. Unfold the annals of the world, and find one person who in sickness, in old age, and in the hour of death, lamented that he had made religion his one great subject. Your search is vain. Thousands and tens of thousands have lamented in their last hours that they spent their days without religion: but not one is found who avowed that he deplored his having been so much under its control. Surely that choice which will afford you peace at the last, which will give you joy when you are leaving this world for ever, and entering on a new and everlast-

ing state of existence, is the choice which you ought to make, and with which you ought to be satisfied, and to which you ought to be faithful. I add,

6. Be persuaded of the excellence of your choice, although you may be the children of affliction. Does it follow that because you are the children of God you are to enjoy prosperity in all things? Far otherwise. Affliction of one sort or other will, most probably, be more or less your lot. You will see the ungodly prosperous, while you are in distress. Study the thirty-seventh and seventy-third Psalms. Envy not those who have their paradise on earth. Look on things with the eye of faith. Then admit that piety with affliction is far preferable to ungodliness and prosperity.

Let these few remarks suffice. As true Christians, God's truth is your light, God's mercy in Christ is your confidence, God himself is your object, His Spirit is your Sanctifier, obeying His laws is your employment, His favour is your happiness, and His glorious presence hereafter, with the pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore, will be your portion. Only consider this, and you must be convinced, whatever be the perverse suggestions of careless men, that the true Christian is the good and great character. Consequently, whatever you hear, whatever be your condition, whatever be your path, smooth or rough, whatever be your day, bright or dark, you have



every reason to be thankful for the choice which by divine grace you have made, and to be confirmed in it. Well may you go forward, saying with the Psalmist, "Happy is the people that is in such a case : yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

#### THE COLLECT.

"O Almighty Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments ; that, through Thy most mighty protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul ; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

#### THE PRAYER.

O Merciful and Gracious God, I desire to bless and praise Thee for Thy great goodness in bringing me to the knowledge of Thyself in Jesus Christ, and for planting my feet in the way of righteousness, life, and peace. Thou hast in great compassion and loving kindness delivered me from the dominion of my spiritual enemies, enriched me with the blessings of redeeming love, and opened before me the prospect of eternal glory and happiness. But it yet remains, O Lord, that I pass over the land of my pilgrimage, the wilderness of human life ; in which I shall be subject to various

events and trials. How often shall I hear Thy truth verified, and thy faithful people degraded! How often shall I see the wicked prosperous and triumphant, while Thy servants, and perhaps myself, are depressed and afflicted! Here, O gracious Father, I think of my own folly and weakness and corruption; and look onward to the future with solicitude. But Thou art my refuge and support: Thou canst preserve me, and keep me steadfast in the faith: and this Thou wilt do, if I look to Thee, trust in Thee, and call upon Thee. Help me, then, to commit myself unto Thee unreservedly. Enlighten my mind, strengthen my principles, purify my affections, and grant that my soul may always follow hard after Thee. Grant that by Thy grace I may be strong in the faith, ascribing glory to Thee, enjoying every comfort with a grateful heart, bearing every trial with a truly resigned spirit, and endeavouring in all things to keep my conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. Let invisible things be habitually present to my mind: and let me always act upon earth, unseduced, unterrified, unshaken, unaffected, by all that I see or hear, as one who is looking to, and preparing for, a glorious inheritance in the everlasting Canaan above. Grant this, I beseech Thee, O gracious Father, for the sake of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SATISFACTION.

“ What have I left, that I should stay and groan ?

The most of me to heaven is fled :

My thoughts and joys are all packed up and gone,  
And for their old acquaintance plead.

O show Thyself to me,

Or take me up to Thee !”—*Herbert.*

. . . . . “ Admit immortal life,

And virtue is knight-errantry no more :

Each virtue brings in hand a golden dower,

Far richer in reversion: hope exults,

And, though much bitter in our cup is thrown,

Predominates, and gives the taste of heaven.”

*Young.*

I AM not aware that any one line can be laid down to show the course of an individual from a thoughtless and sinful to a thoughtful and holy life. The history of the first stages of piety is exceedingly different in different persons. Not only is this the case, but the apprehensions of the same truths, or what I may call spiritual consciousness, is during life very different in different Christians. Piety is substantially the same thing in all who possess it; but, from the agency of numberless causes, it has an inconceivable circumstantial variety of complexion and character. Let no true Christian,

therefore, be dissatisfied with himself, merely because he does not see and feel all truths exactly in the same manner as some say that they see and feel them.

Further, I do not see how any definite time can be laid down, when Christians are to arrive at peace and satisfaction in piety. Some obtain true repose in a short period: some are a long time before they obtain it. As a general remark, it may be said, that extremes of any kind are not pleasing. They create a suspicion that too much natural feeling is at work, or that human opinions have an undue influence. If the growth be rapid, we ask, Is not Imagination here? If it be too slow, we ask, Is not either error, or indolence, or inconsistency here? Plants that flourish only for a short season, have a rapid growth—but trees that live through ages grow slowly. If, however, there be life, we are perplexed if we do not see sure tokens of it.

I suppose, my young readers, that you have made such attainments in piety as to be satisfied with your having, through grace, chosen the good part. You know so much of the truth, mercy, and power of the gospel, as to be unfeignedly thankful to God for the great things which He has done for you.

Suppose that you view a traveller, or a pilgrim. He began his journey in the morning. The country through which his road lay was strange to

him. He had heard odd, vague, and contradictory reports concerning it. He was compelled, however, to enter upon his journey. He left his home. Some laughed at him, and some persuaded him to be satisfied where he was, and some advised him to delay for a season, until he had thought more about his purpose. He probably had some mis-giving thoughts, and some anxious feelings: but he listened to no dissuading voices. He set out: and what was the first stage? and how did it end? The sun was only just above the horizon: thick clouds covered its glorious orb: deep mists shrouded the mountains and the valleys: he saw but a very little way before him: his path was sometimes thorny and sometimes miry. He was often perplexed, and often dispirited. But there was a conviction in his breast, that he must go forward: and forward he went with mingled feelings of hope and fear, of calmness and disquietude. He occasionally arrived at a stately tree, beneath whose arms he could repose; he sometimes saw a verdant and flowery spot that delighted his eyes; and he sometimes lighted on a spring whose waters quenched his thirst. Thus he was comforted, and he cherished the hope that he should arrive at some altogether pleasing district. He still advanced; and at length the thick clouds begun to break, and now and then he was cheered with the light of the sun: the mists vanished from the hills and valleys; and he found himself on the borders of a fine

champaign, which presented to his view unnumbered charms.

Here then begins, in fact, the second stage of his journey. The district upon which he now enters is not a paradise, but yet it promises him much enjoyment. There is an elevation before him: he gains its summit: and there he indulges in various reflection. He considers what he has left behind him, and what he has already endured; and he anticipates, with perhaps more or less of fancy, the satisfaction which he shall enjoy. Feelings of delight prevail in his heart: smiles adorn his countenance; and his expressions are those of gratitude. He is glad that he listened to none of those voices that would have kept him from entering on his journey. He begins to be an experienced traveller. He is persuaded, on sound principles, that his happiness will increase, if he faithfully persevere in his good course.

The application of this image to yourselves, my young readers, is so obvious, that I need not dwell upon it. You are Christian pilgrims: and you know what you have left, renounced, abandoned; what obstructions you have met with; and what you have endured. You review the past with gratitude, and anticipate the future with hope. You rightly apprehend to a certain extent both good and evil, truth and error, the source of happiness and of misery. You feel the spirituality of your being—the spirituality of religion—and you

know that "patient continuance in well doing" is now the essential point.

It was not my design to accompany you any farther than is pointed out by the image which I have selected. I suppose you to have finished the first stage of your spiritual life, in which, through divine grace, you have by a true repentance and by a true faith turned to God and Christ, and chosen the good part. I suppose you to have advanced so far in the second stage, as to have arrived at peace, and joy, and satisfaction, and repose of soul. The heavens are so far bright, your path is so far plain, your prospects are so far clear, that you feel calm delight and solid satisfaction. Though many things which I have advanced belong to a still farther period, yet it is here that my work properly ends. I now leave you to abler guides, who will teach you not merely to travel as pilgrims, but to work as labourers, and to fight as soldiers.

My limits will allow me to offer you a few more remarks: and I willingly confess that I have no wish to quit you abruptly. In the remainder of this chapter I shall offer you some observations on the subject of Satisfaction, though I may be guilty of repeating in some measure what has been already advanced.

True piety is most undoubtedly the only satisfactory portion. All other things, when compared with it, are shadow and vanity. Let not the com-

mon blessings of human life be undervalued: but let all things have their proper places. It is by a reference to the soul and eternity that we ought to form our estimate of objects and pursuits. Wealth, honour, science, pleasure, amusement—what benefit do these confer upon the soul? Not the least: it is only religion that enlightens and blesses it—that enlivens it, expands it, exalts it, refines it, enriches it, ennobles it—that makes it holy and sublime here, and fits it to be a holy and sublime agent through eternal ages.

You will always find piety to be that which affords you satisfaction. The more faith and love and hope, the more you abound in Christian tempers and performances, the greater will your satisfaction be. In prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in youth and age, at home and abroad, in solitude and in the busy walks of life, Wisdom will be your companion and friend, to guide you with her lamp, to cheer you with her cup of consolation, and to animate you with her voice.

But here allow me distinctly to observe, as it has been uniformly inculcated in these pages, that there is no paradise here either external or internal. This world is a mingled world, and true Christians are mingled characters. Aim at perfection: advance towards it: but be not astonished or alarmed, though deeply humbled, that you find yourselves, and that you see others, far, too far, from the



attainment of your glorious aim. All below is imperfection. The kingdom of grace is a paradise when compared with the world; but it is not without many a thorn and weed, without many a foul beast and loathsome bird. This we shall understand, if we look rightly around us, or faithfully explore our own hearts. Heaven is the only perfect paradise—the only world of perfect satisfaction.

But, further, I would make a marked distinction between solid satisfaction and what may be called the conscious enjoyment of delightful feelings. The latter are varying, and may be possessed more abundantly by the young than by the advanced Christian: the former is far more uniform, and is the portion of the calm, reflecting, and mature believer. If you exercise wisdom, you will be satisfied, although your feelings may not be bright and animated. The pilgrim is satisfied when he knows that he is walking in the path that will lead him to his home, although the sun does not shine brightly upon him—although soft and fragrant gales do not breathe mildly around him. Do not account it strange, if at a future period you do not feel exactly the same life, tenderness, and animation that you feel at present. As you become more familiar with piety, the feelings will not be extinct, but they will become more mild, chastened, calm, and uniform: and then the happiness of the believer has in it less of what may be called the

sensitive, and more of the spiritual. There are many humble Christians who do not enjoy large measures of the pleasures of religion, but who have ample cause to be satisfied: for they who walk before God with tender hearts and upright lives, the former bent and moulded to God's way of salvation, and the latter the fruit of having received that salvation, must enjoy the persuasion, that true piety is the good part, and that the final issue will be blessed.

Your satisfaction in piety will in general be in proportion to the simplicity, purity, and consistency which you maintain in piety—in faith, love, hope, humility, resignation, and obedience. I need not here speak of exceptions: but commonly he that soweth much reapeth much: he that is diligent in religion is happy in religion. The clouds will gather at times, but they will soon be scattered. Seek plain scriptural views, with the genuine spirit of the gospel, and walk in the good old way: and then, though earth will not be heaven, you will always have reason to say that you have a goodly heritage.

Your life may be chequered, and your feelings will vary; but if you can look to God in Christ Jesus as your reconciled Father, you will have rest, peace, and joy. The elements may war around you; but your anchor is fixed upon a rock. You will never lament the sacrifices that you make, or the difficulties that you undergo. You will never

lament that you are pious—only that you are not sufficiently so. You will always own, whatever you have, or have not, that God has given you the best treasure in giving you the pearl of great price.

#### THE COLLECT.

“O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen,”

#### THE PRAYER.

O Blessed and Gracious God, I thank and praise Thee for having translated me into the kingdom of Thy dear Son, so that I am no longer in darkness, the slave of sin and of the world, but am made acquainted with Thy holy word, and in some measure, I trust, a partaker of the blessedness which it imparts to those who rightly receive it. Great, I know, is the peace of those who love Thy law. Unspeakably blessed are those who are contrite and humble, believing and obedient. I acknowledge with unfeigned gratitude Thy great goodness towards me: and I beseech Thee to give me grace, that I may live in agreement with Thy

word, more abundantly experience the blessedness of true piety, and be faithful unto death. All things, O Lord, are in Thy hands. In prosperity be Thou my Preserver: in adversity be Thou my Comforter: and in all the circumstances of life, let my happiness be that which is derived from Thee, and which is found by cleaving to Thee with full purpose of heart. Keep me, I pray Thee, from ever seeking happiness in the broken cisterns of the world. Thou art the fountain of living waters: to Thee may I look; and from Thee may I daily receive all that is needful for my happiness and welfare. O grant that I may be always found faithful in Thy ways, acting with diligence, enjoying with thankfulness, enduring with patience, and persevering with circumspection, until mortality is exchanged for immortality, and I am made perfect in bliss in Thy everlasting kingdom: and to Thee, O Father, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one glorious and ever-blessed Jehovah, be all honour and praise both now and for evermore. Amen.

## ACCURATE NOTIONS.

"O how unlike the complex works of man  
Heaven's easy, artless, unincumbered plan!  
No meretricious graces to beguile,  
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;  
From ostentation as from weakness free,  
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,  
Majestic in its own simplicity.  
Inscribed above the portal from afar,  
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,  
Legible only by the light they give,  
Stand the soul-quickenings words—BELIEVE AND LIVE."

*Cowper.*

"How many thousand souls miscarry with the presumptuous affectation of forbidden knowledge! O God, Thou hast revealed more than we can know, enough to make us happy: teach me a sober knowledge, and a contented ignorance.—*Bp. Hall*

"Surely the man who fears God, and trembles at His word, must observe with pain the careless levity with which so many approach the secrets of His throne, and the profane familiarity with which they explore the depths of His hidden counsels."

*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

BEING now possessors of a calm and fixed piety,  
(for this, my young readers, is my supposition

respecting you,) you will probably read various books, hear various statements, and enter into various conversations. Religion will become, more or less, a subject of mental examination. You will wish to understand many doctrines more minutely, not receiving them in a general form, but studying them in their relations and dependencies. Allow me, then, to offer you a few remarks on the subject of Accurate Notions, as much, I confess, for the sake of caution as of direction.

“ It is an evil incident to man,  
And of the worst, that unexplored he leaves  
Truths useful, and attainable with ease,  
To search forbidden deeps, where mystery lies  
Not to be solved, and useless if it might.  
Mysteries are food for angels: they digest  
With ease, and find them nutriment; but man,  
While yet he dwells below, must stoop to glean  
His manna from the ground, or starve and die.”

*Cowper.*

The examination of revealed doctrines, when it is conducted in a proper manner, and in a right spirit, is a most important and beneficial employment of the human mind. But a cold, rash, disputing, and hair-splitting theologian, who employs himself on abstractions, subtilties, distinctions, and refinements, is a character that I cannot admire. If you be naturally cool, logical, and acute, you will be liable to plunge into abstract speculation. If, again, you be naturally ardent, with an active

imagination, you will be liable to be captivated with splendid fancies, and striking novelties, and the gay vagaries that folly suggests and ignorance defends. Here is the danger. Where is your security? I answer—in attending to this scriptural rule. “STAND YE IN THE WAYS, AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.” Jer. vi. 16.

I am very far from saying, Do not think, examine, and compare statements: on the contrary, I would say, Make religion the subject of close and thoughtful study according to your ability. Endeavour to obtain solid scriptural views of all leading truths. Be able to assign a reason for what you believe. Have solid arguments and clear texts, to vindicate your sentiments and proceedings.—But suffer me here to advance a few remarks—not perhaps altogether pleasing to your sanguine feelings, but the truth of which you will learn in the course of time and experience.

1. We know but little. Is this a startling position? The longer you live, the more fully you will be persuaded that it is true, if you do not mistake your scantling of ideas for the universality of knowledge. If you converse with a sciolist in human knowledge, he may speak as if he knew almost every thing: but if you converse with a sound scholar, he will tell you—“A boundless and unfathomable ocean is before me: I walk along its

margin; I just go ankle deep." This is equally applicable to religious characters. The spiritual world without, the counsels, government, and ways of the great and glorious Jehovah—the spiritual world within, the faculties of your own souls, and their mysterious workings—how little do any of us comprehend of these things, though we presume to speak of them with fluency, as if they were fully submitted to our inspection! "Ye discern less," says the excellent author of the Christian Exodus, "of the plans of eternal wisdom, than the insect, whose eye scarcely takes in the surface of the clod on which he stands, can see of the world around him." When we meditate largely and deeply on the Bible, we rejoice that we know what is needful for our salvation; but we are compelled to own, that we have the greatest reason to be modest and diffident: for we see but little—we see that little but imperfectly, partially, confusedly. How much better, safer, and wiser is humble and silent ignorance, than bold and talkative presumption. Often recollect the declaration of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.

2. No two individuals, most probably, think exactly in the same manner on the same subject. On what are called the essential truths, serious Christians are agreed: that is, they so think and feel as to be cordially attached to each other in Christian affection. But let even these take up any topic, and enter into a minute delineation of



their views, and you will soon find that one proposes one modification of a statement, and a second another modification of it, and so on. They hold the general truth firmly: but they differ more or less in the conclusions which they deduce from it. If these persons entered into a debate, and suffered feelings to dethrone reason, it would be curious, painfully amusing, to hear their several modifications, exceptions, and distinctions. This diversity of view is probably an imperfection belonging to the present state. Education, prejudices, peculiar constitution of mind, with other causes, may lead to this diversity. The fact is unquestionable; and many practical lessons may be derived from it. 1. Be not hastily displeased with humble and teachable persons who do not think precisely as you think. 2. Do not maintain your own peculiar views of a truth in a too dogmatical manner. 3. Be diligent in endeavouring to discover truth, but be not too bold and positive in asserting that you have found it, and fully comprehend it. Let me add, It is by no means improbable, that, however dogmatical you may be at present, you will see many truths at a future period in a somewhat different light from that in which you see them at present.

3. There are many things in religion which we cannot comprehend. Many accomplished minds in all ages have—

“reasoned high  
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,  
Fixed Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute ;  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

*Milton.*

The counsels of the Infinite God, and the nature and operations of the spiritual world, have employed the intellects of the acute and the pens of the learned ; but they are not so revealed as to be grasped by the human mind, and reasonings upon them must consequently be in a great measure conjectural. The Bible is the book of Mercy, Grace, and Life, intended to make us humble and holy believers, not boasting metaphysicians. Our business is to receive the divine record, to repent, to believe, to do the will of our heavenly Father,—not to fathom the counsels or explain the measures of the Moral Governour of the universe. Yet I do not say, Never direct your attention to high and mysterious themes ;—but I say, When your attention is directed to them, let it be done with humility and awe. The counsels of God are fully known only by Himself. Beware, then, of a rash spirit, which would urge you to rush with audacious curiosity into the examination of inscrutable things. Always humbly believe. Never vainly speculate.

4. Time is badly spent which is spent on improper subjects, or on proper subjects in an

improper manner. We are not born merely to amuse or perplex ourselves with bold, or ingenious, or intricate musings; but to seek our edification in substantial goodness. What would you say of a husbandman who roved all day in the tangling mazes of a forest, or spent his hours in gazing on beautiful scenery, instead of cultivating his fields, and making preparation for an abundant harvest? You would not hesitate to admit that he acted very perversely, and in a manner highly injurious to himself and to others. But similar to this is the conduct of those who surrender themselves to a fanciful and speculating spirit in religion, instead of vitally and practically, humbly and simply, attending to plain truth and obvious duty. Nothing forbids you to take an occasional excursion into the fields of speculation: but never forget that edification is the essential thing.

“ But apt the mind or fancy is to rove  
Unchecked, and of her roving is no end,  
Till warned, or by experience taught, she learn,  
That, not to know at large of things remote  
From use obscure and subtle; but, to know  
That which before us lies in daily life,  
Is the prime wisdom: What is more, is fume,  
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence;  
And renders us, in things that most concern,  
Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek.”

*Milton.*

5 The adoption of determinate ideas on indeter-

minable subjects, and of amusing fancies, is a melancholy abuse of Christian blessings. Wisdom, moderation, and humility are invaluable. When we forget the real design of the Gospel, which is to bring us near to God in Christ Jesus, to unite us to Christ our living Head, to make us followers of Him in faith, holiness, and obedience, we put ourselves in perilous circumstances, and become an easy prey to the lovers of novelty and vagary. Advocates of fancy, extravagance, absurdity, and ultraism, have existed in all ages: I need not tell you that the present age is not without them. If you mean to look back in future life with satisfaction on the past, and to anticipate what lies before in the joy of a meek and solid hope—Beware. Be stars, not comets. Move in a regular orbit round the eternal centre of attraction—the Sun of Righteousness.

6. The obscurity of Revelation on some points, the mysteries which it contains, and that diversity of view which I have already mentioned, ought never to excite in your minds a prejudice against it, or cause you to look upon it as unsatisfactory. There is no more obscurity, no more mystery, in revelation than there is in the material world, and in the course of providence. If darkness offend you in the one case, let it offend you also in the other—and then nothing remains but the awful conduct of arraigning God for the constitution which He, in infinite wisdom and goodness, has

established.—Nor, again, is there probably more diversity in our apprehension of religious truth, than there is in our apprehension of any other sort of truth, excepting what belongs to demonstrative science. Nay, to be familiar—you put a lovely and fragrant flower before a dozen persons: but tell me, do they all see its hues and form precisely in the same manner, and so as to have precisely the same feelings excited by it? Wise scholars do not quarrel with the darkness and difficulty that belong to the subjects which are before them. They know that they are in a course of training, and that what is now abstruse and intricate will at a future period be plain and clear. This world is a school both as to the head and the heart, and is admirably adapted for disciplining them, if we rightly improve our condition. We are now in a low form—we shall even here, if we prosper in the divine life, be advanced to a higher—but the sublime form is above, where the mysteries of divine love and wisdom will be the aliment of our enlarged and purified souls.

7. Sound views in religion are not to be obtained in a few days or weeks. Fancies, feelings, prejudices, errors—these belong to man; and they cannot be rejected in a moment. The twilight, and sometimes a long misty morning, precedes the full and clear day. New ideas are apt to please the mind: and we may adopt to-day notions which we shall reject to-morrow. Young people,

you will forgive my plain declaration, are, in many cases, inclined to think that they are wiser than they really are, and that their notions must undoubtedly be correct. But it is with the true and wise Christian, as it is with the wise and true scholar: he is always enlarging, correcting, modifying, purifying (if I may use the term,) his attainments. As you proceed in life, my young readers, it probably will happen, that you will read in a judicious book, or hear in a valuable conversation, some solid and large ideas which will materially affect the whole current of your thoughts, extend the sphere of vision, and improve your views. These are gems, not found every day, or every-where. But, to be concise, it is by reading much, thinking much, and hearing much, that large and sound views in religion are obtained by persons who know how to distinguish between reality and fancy—between knowledge and assumption. There is a wide difference between the views of a young and of a mature Christian. My admonition to you is, Be scholars; always scholars; who know that you have much to learn, and much to correct and modify.

I do not wish that my remarks should deter you from endeavouring to gain the best views of religious subjects which you can. It becomes every Christian to be diligent with his mind in discovering truth, as well as to be diligent with his hands in performing the common duties of human

life. But if you be ardent and sanguine, and therefore impatient to enlist under the banners of some theological founder of party views, the due improvement of my remarks will lead you to check your ardour, to pause in your course, and to recollect the propriety, and even the necessity, grounded on the nature of religion, and on the nature and circumstances of man in the present state, of being modest, patient, and slow in settling your notions of profound truths. To attend to this suggestion will, I am confidently persuaded, largely contribute to your happiness and welfare, and give you true satisfaction in all those hours of holy solitude in which you will review the measures that you adopted, and the path in which you walked.

#### THE COLLECT.

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Amen.

#### THE PRAYER.

O Father of lights, and Fountain of all truth, I bless and praise Thee for that measure of knowledge in divine things which Thou hast already

given me. Increase, I beseech Thee, this knowledge more and more. Deliver me from that pride and folly which would lead me to suppose that I am altogether wise in the faith. Convince me of my ignorance; and give me the teachable disposition of a child; and may I maintain such a disposition through the whole of life. O that I may meekly and thoughtfully search the Scriptures, hear religious instruction, listen to pious conversation, and pray that Thy Holy Spirit may lead me to the right apprehension of all those truths which relate to my spiritual welfare. Deliver me from that rashness and vain curiosity which would urge me to explore with unholy boldness those things which are too high for me. Secret things belong unto Thee, O Lord: and if at any time I meditate upon them, let me do it with adoring awe, well knowing that it does not belong to man to fathom Thy counsels. Those things which Thou hast more fully revealed are the proper subjects for my study: to these let my mind be directed; and grant that I may advance in the saving knowledge of them as I advance in years. The more I know of the saving truths of the gospel, the more may I be filled with thankfulness and humility; fully devoted to Thee and to Thy service, and happy in the possession of the blessings of an enlightened and efficient piety. May it please Thee, O Father, thus to keep and bless me, and to lead me onward to higher attainments in sound knowledge and in



real goodness, until I shall be removed to that glorious world where all is light and holiness, there to be with Thee for ever, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.

"He that would win the race must guide his horse  
Obedient to the customs of the course ;  
Else, though unequalled to the goal he flies,  
A meaner than himself shall gain the prize.  
Grace leads the right way : if you choose the wrong,  
Take it and perish ; but restrain your tongue ;  
Charge not, with light sufficient, and left free,  
Your wilful suicide on God's decree."—*Couper*.

"Each true Christian is a right traveller : his life his  
walk, Christ his way, and heaven his home His walk  
painful, his way perfect, his home pleasing. I will not  
loiter, lest I come short of home : I will not wander,  
lest I come wide of home, but be content to travel  
hard, and be sure I walk right, so shall my safe way  
find its end at home, and my painful walk make my  
home welcome."—*Warwick's Spare Minutes*.

He who feels a lively interest in the spiritual  
interest of the young, and undertakes to address  
them, will leave many things unsaid which he  
wished to advance. I will, however, my young  
readers, only trespass further on your patience and  
attention while I offer you a few thoughts on  
matters which deserve your best consideration.

Permit me to set them before you, for the sake of brevity, in the form of directions.

1. Attend to reading. Reading supplies materials for thinking: it employs, strengthens, enlarges, feeds the mind. Some read every book that comes before them: some read only the Bible. These are extremes. Read what is valuable. You may talk, or make a noise, without knowledge: reading will enable you to converse usefully, or it will teach you to be silent. Voluble tongues generally indicate unfurnished minds.

2. Think much. When you read the Bible, and when you read a good book, be sure to think; to meditate, to understand what you read. Unless you do this, reading is but mere mechanism: the eye and tongue are employed, but the mind is at the most but half awake. Reading and memory give knowledge: reflection gives wisdom. Reading makes you rich in the stores of others: thought makes you rich from your own mine.

3. Pray much. All alive at the commencement of piety, you perhaps then thought that you would never become dull and careless and remiss in devotion. Experience will teach you a different lesson. You may habitually pray as to form and words: but, the spirit of prayer—look well to that. While you retain the spirit of devotion, you will prosper in piety; but when that languishes, your piety will decline. Happy the Christian, old or young, who, by divine grace, maintains a devout frame of soul!

4. Converse with the wise and good. If, in your youth you only converse with the young, or with them chiefly, the effect of it, to say the least, will be doubtful. Some young persons, indeed, have sedateness and knowledge far beyond their years: but in general the experience of the young must be small; their views cannot be expanded, diversified, and mature: and, therefore, by only associating with them, your mistakes will be confirmed rather than corrected. If you have opportunity, you will do well to consult, as occasion may require, those who are judicious and advanced in piety. Be not offended with them for plainly pointing out to you your faults and mistakes, for reproving your exorbitances and checking your ardour, or for sweeping away with an unsparing hand your splendid dreams and imaginations. Converse with the wise, if you would become wise.

5. Beware of intimacy with the world. You may now think that you have renounced the world for ever: but you will soon learn that you are to live in the world, and to perform your duties among human beings. Beware of a worldly spirit, of lukewarmness, of compromise and compliance. Always remember whose you are, what you are, where you are, and what is required of you, both as to your spirit and conduct, by your divine Master. By your friendly intercourse with the world you may think of benefiting them. Friendly

and social you ought to be: but take care that the world do not injure you. Associate with the world, (I would almost say, as much as you please,) provided that you faithfully regard your Christian character. Let me plainly tell you a most painful secret—The social heart is very apt to forget the Christian spirit. Here is the danger; here is the evil: and here thousands have—I was going to say, ruined themselves. Give way to the more social feelings; and you laugh and joke with the world, and catch their spirit, and forget the disciple of Christ, and incur—the reproach of your consciences—the contempt of the world whom you strive to please and conciliate. Be kind, benevolent, respectful, courteous towards all men: but let not your familiarities and intimacies be worldly. Be social, but be not secular. Be in the world, but not of the world. Let your delight be in the excellent of the earth. Do lambs associate with wolves, or doves with vultures?

6. Cultivate simplicity in religion. Read, think, converse; be well-informed and wise Christians: but avoid wild speculations and fascinating vagaries: be the plain and sober, solid and judicious; true and sincere, humble and devout disciples of the Scriptures. Humility, repentance, self-abasement; faith, hope, and love; holiness and obedience; resignation and perseverance; spirituality of mind and heart—attend to these things in the plain and pure light of God's word, with honest

~~and fervent~~ prayer and supplication. Be Christians—persons who know Christ, rely upon Him, love Him, are united to Him, follow Him, glory in Him. Habitually depend on the Holy Spirit—live in Him, walk in Him, bring forth His fruits. Proceed in this manner: leave fine-spun webs, and subtle distinctions, and gorgeous fancies, and fugitive dreams to others. Cleave to the great truths of the gospel—by these be guided, supported, comforted, and animated. Feed on plain manna: drink pure waters: walk in the old way: repose in the shade of the tree of life. Keep your eyes ever upon the Cross, your feet in the narrow way, your souls thirsting for God—for the living God.

7. Be always correcting and rectifying your piety. Improvement in religion—is an expression that contains a volume. You will find yourselves guilty of various faults, if you be faithful in self-scrutiny. Sometimes you will attend to one thing—one truth, duty, or grace—to the comparative exclusion of others. Sometimes you may regard doctrine and grace, as if religion were nothing else, and thus approach to antinomianism. Sometimes you may look to duty in such a manner as to border on legalism or self-righteousness. Sometimes you may so regard the means of grace, and the Bible itself, as to forget that they are only means: and at other times you may so regard spirituality as to undervalue ordinances. You.

may find in your constitution a disposition leaning to some error, prejudice, or fancy. In short, we are apt to dwell on sacred things in a partial manner—that subject absorbing the attention which happens to be pleasing to the mind and heart at the particular time. I cannot enlarge on this important and boundless topic. Let these hints suffice to put you on your guard—producing in each heart the conviction—“I am acting wisely, and doing well, only whilst I am improving in religion, correcting what is wrong, and seeking to possess it in its own sacred and heavenly integrity.”

8. Improve providential occurrences. Such will take place in your families and neighbourhood. They may be painful or delightful. Own in them the hand and will of your Heavenly Father. Consider that His measures are designed for spiritual ends. Let those which are painful urge you to seriousness and reflection: those which are joyful, to gratitude and praise: and all, to prayer that every dispensation may be profitable both to yourselves and others.

9. Turn your faults to good account. Never be ashamed to own them: fabricate no excuse for them: at any rate, never justify them. The best are liable to err. Few spend a day so correctly, as not to have done or said something which, upon reflection, they wish had not been said or done. Let your faults make you humble and circumspect, and particularly careful not to repeat them. Let

them make you less censorious, and more compassionate, when you hear of the faults of others. He makes a right use of his faults, who is urged by the past to seek greater excellence for the future.

10. In all circumstances, and in all respects, study to maintain your character as true Christians. In your temper, words, and actions; in prosperity and adversity; in solitude and in company; when approved and when provoked; remember your divine Master. Let it be made evident that your piety is not a notion, profession, imagination, sentiment—but a principle that is solid and influential, competent to support, comfort, guide, and control you. “I am Christian”—consider that, and not only exempt religion from censure, but adorn it.

11. Make your lives useful. I do not say, Be in a bustle—never satisfied but when you have something to do abroad. Wisely consider your duties, stations, talents, opportunities, little things as well as greater things. To most persons, the family is the first sphere of duty. Your neighbourhood is the next. Then something perhaps may be done for your country, and for the remotest districts of the globe. If wisdom teach you, and love inspire you, you will be always striving to obtain, or to do, good. “All human life is really made up of a succession of little occupations and duties, which without tedious minuteness, could not be re-



lated; but in reality, it is a constant fidelity, in the aggregate of these little things, that forms the true greatness, and grandeur, and solidity of the Christian character." *Memoirs of Port Royal*, vol. ii. 95.

12. Cultivate nearness to God. Enoch walked with God:—and why should not we. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." "I am continually with thee"—was the language of the Psalmist:—and why should it not be ours? Happy he who lives near to God in faith, fear, love, and holy aspiration! What watchfulness over the heart does it imply! What crucifixion to the world! What devotion! What grace from above! But without something of this pure and sublime piety, what poor, feeble, darkling, groping, grovelling, defective Christians we are! Once more,

13. Be always advancing in the divine life—abound more and more in all the excellence of piety, both spiritual and practical. You will never arrive at any point this side the grave at which you can say, Nothing more is to be obtained, or abandoned, or done. Some may affect to bewail their sins and sinfulness, and yet make no effort to correct the evil. Some may see higher attainments to be possible, but yet rest satisfied with those which have been already made. Be thankful for what you are by divine grace: but always seek to become more wise, humble, be-

living, holy, obedient, heavenly. Never forget the declaration of the Apostle Paul—"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

## THE COLLECT.

"Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Ever-blessed God, when I think of my circumstances and my duties, I clearly see and strongly feel the absolute need of Thy preventing and sustaining grace, that I may be steadfast in religion, adorn it and glorify Thee by leading a truly Christian life. I acknowledge my utter inability to proceed successfully in the Christian course by my own strength, so as to enjoy the pure consolations, and to exhibit the real excellence, of the consistent believer. I have enemies to conquer, difficulties to surmount, dangers to guard against, duties to perform, sufferings to endure, and one narrow path to walk in to the end of my pilgrim-

age. How perilous and hopeless were my condition, if I did not know that Thou art as willing as Thou art able to supply my wants, and to make me in the midst of my weakness, strong, courageous, and persevering. This is my joy and comfort—if I look to Thee, and depend upon Thee, Thou wilt bless, guide, and preserve me in all circumstances. Give me, O Lord, a thoughtful and devout mind: and let me be more and more separate from a vain and sinful world, near to Thyself, and pure and sincere in religion. Help me to demean myself as a Christian in all cases. Make me duly sensible of my manifold imperfection: lead me on to higher attainments: and let the whole of my life be spent in a faithful and diligent preparation for the future world. Make me unfeignedly thankful unto Thee, O Lord, for all Thy goodness to me: and let me never be slothful in temporal or spiritual business, but fervent in spirit, serving Thee. May I be always anxious to become more humble and holy, more obedient and useful, more fit for the mansions of everlasting blessedness. While I live, to me let it be Christ to live: when I die, to me let it be gain to die. Thus, O gracious Father, be pleased to bless and keep me day by day, until, this life ended, I am with Thee for ever, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour. Amen.

## CONCLUSION.

1. Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs  
2. The comfort of a few poor added days,  
3. Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul  
4. Of him, whom Hope has with a touch made whole.  
5. 'Tis Heaven, all Heaven descending on the wings  
6. Of the glad legions of the King of kings ;  
7. 'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part,  
8. 'Tis God Himself triumphant in his heart."

*Cowper.*

1. "1. Get into the way. 2. Then study on it. 3. Then strip and lay aside every thing that would hinder. 4. Beware of By-paths. 5. Do not gaze and stare too much about thee, but be sure to ponder the path of thy feet. 6. Do not stop for any that call after thee, whether it be the world, the flesh, or the devil, for all these will hinder thy journey, if possible. 7. Be not daunted with any discouragements that thou meetest with as thou goest. 8. Take heed of stumbling at the cross. And, 9. Cry hard to God for an enlightened heart, and a willing mind : and God give thee a prosperous journey."—*Bunyan.*

HAVING now conducted you, my young readers, through a series of remarks on religion, with the supposition that by divine grace you have entered into the subject, and are now to be considered as

the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, it only remains for me to conclude my work. In the course of it, I have set before you the nature of religion and of the religious life: I have spoken much to you both of the world without, and of the world within. In every chapter I have endeavoured to advance plain truth, without any compromise, and without any exorbitancy. I have not written with the least reference to any human system: I advocate plain, sound, vital, and practical Biblical religion: and in so doing I think that I act most consistently with the doctrines and spirit of the Anglican Church, and also in a manner most conducive, if it please the great Head of the Church to prosper my labours, to the real interests of my readers.

And now, instead of advancing any further remarks of my own, either in the way of exhortation, encouragement, or warning, I shall suppose that one of my young readers, to whom the book has been rendered useful, concludes it: I hope, therefore, that I do not wander far from the truth when I suppose him, having withdrawn to the retirement of his own chamber for the exercise of serious reflection, to speak to the following effect.

“I was young and thoughtless, employing myself as others in the common routine of daily business, and enjoying those things which are agreeable to the youthful heart. I was lively in the company of my coevals; listening to their conver-

sation, partaking of their merriment, joining them in their amusements, and walking in their ways. I sometimes looked forward to future years, and amused myself with dreams of happiness, giving to the pictures of imagination all that was graceful in form and exquisite in colour. Religion was made a subordinate subject, frequently forgotten, and never seriously regarded. I thought it superfluous to give it any decided attention: for I was guilty of no gross sin, I performed the common duties of my place, and adorned myself with many pleasing and amiable qualities. I was extolled by some, commended by others, and approved by myself. But meanwhile I knew not God, myself, my circumstances, or the proper business and the great end of human life. The world were pleased with me, and I was pleased with the world. This was the season of trifling and carelessness, of ignorance and death.

“But the merciful and gracious God did not leave me to remain in this state. The season of light, of feeling, of inquiry came. A divine influence, such is my full persuasion, was put forth: it effectually wrought upon my immortal soul: I was led to meditate upon, and to examine, with a serious mind, the nature and condition of man, and the things that belong to his peace. Thoughts of God, of my soul, of sin, of salvation, of eternity occupied my mind and heart. I thought, I read, I prayed as well as I could. I

soon found that religion was not to be a secondary subject; that the world could not make me happy; that an intelligent and immortal soul could only be happy by enjoying the divine favour. I discovered that the notions of persons in general respecting religion are superficial and mistaken, and that their prejudices against true piety are altogether unjust. I was led on to enter into divine things more closely: new light broke in upon my mind, and new feelings and desires sprung up in my heart. This was the season of twilight, of the dawn, of incipient life.

“I meditated on God, and I saw His awful as well as His engaging perfections. I meditated on myself, and I discovered my sinfulness and my iniquities. I saw and felt the need of a Saviour and of a Sanctifier, and I was prepared to think of Christ who died for sinners, and of the Holy Ghost who sanctifies sinners. Then I found religion to be a series of spiritual facts of the deepest interest. A sinner needs salvation: without the possession of it, he lives in sin, far from God, and sinks into eternal destruction.

“I now saw that the true Christian is one who enters, by a divine influence, into the Gospel of Christ with all his mind and heart and soul and strength; to be saved from sin—from guilt, from defilement, from corruption, from disobedience, from misery;—to be brought into a state of reconciliation with God, and to be made like Him,

by faith in Christ and by the participation of the Holy Spirit. I was brought to such a state of mind as to renounce my former notions, ways, delights, and objects, and to enter on a new path, to be saved by the divine mercy in Christ, to be renewed by a divine power, to be guided by the divine law;—to put my trust in Christ, to build my hopes upon Him, to love Him, follow Him; to be holy in heart and life; so to live in faith and love and holiness, as to be with Christ for ever.

“To renounce myself, to renounce the world, to abase myself, to receive all good from above as an absolutely unmerited gift—these things, as well as some others, occasioned a struggle. But I saw, I felt, that salvation is every thing; and that it could be found only by a complete submission to the Gospel—by a cordial reception of it. The might of grace, blessed be God, overcame the perverseness of nature; and whatever I had to contend with, I was enabled to devote myself to God and His service in the Gospel of His Son—my only wish being to be a partaker and follower of Christ.

“I attended with a teachable spirit to the voice of instruction. I was taught that I was exposed to a great variety of evils. I was admonished to attend to the great truths of religion, and to walk with humility, circumspection, and diligence in duty, remembering God and waiting upon Him.



Hitherto I have found that the instructions which I received were true and solid: observation and experience have proved this to my mind. While I am thankful for all that has been said to me, I am especially thankful for the grace which has enabled me to profit by it. Thus God has wrought in me: thus far He has brought me.

"Am I proud? No, my God, my Saviour; I am a sinner in a sinful world—but, I trust, a sinner who is a partaker of mercy and grace unto salvation. I adore and bless and thank Thee: but I cannot be proud.

"Am I unhappy? No: I have renounced the pleasures and follies of the world; they are not to my taste. But in the fear and love of God: in faith in Christ and in following Him; in having, as I hope, the kingdom of God within me; in having the kingdom of glory before me; in cultivating the virtues and performing the duties inculcated by the gospel; in striving to live in all things more and more conformably to my high calling; I have happiness—delight, satisfaction, and peace.

"The world is all before me. I know not what a day may bring forth: but I know that God is good and faithful; that He will never forsake those who truly seek Him and humbly walk before Him; and therefore I commit myself, without any anxiety about my allotment, to His providence and grace. Am I now to boast; now to be indolent;

now to think that the victory is won? Far be every thing of this sort from my breast. It now remains for me to be a tree of righteousness, producing good and much fruit—a labourer in the vineyard, bearing the burden and heat of the day—a soldier of Christ, fighting the good fight—a faithful steward of the talents committed to my care. For all this divine grace is sufficient. In this is my confidence and my joy. If I be in Christ and Christ in me, and if I abide in Him, as a branch in the vine, I shall grow, and flourish, and abound in all excellence more and more, and persevere—exhibiting, to the comfort of my own soul, to the benefit of others, to the honour of the gospel, and to the glory of God, a “patient continuance in well doing.” What I have now to do is—“to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” This comprehends every thing.

“Would I now return to the world? No: the world has nothing that can satisfy my soul. I enjoy the bounties of God in His providence. I see magnificence and beauty around me in the works of creation. I can relish all that is ingenious in art and accomplished in taste. But these are not Jehovah. Tell me not of wealth, honour, and transient delights: for the conviction of my enlightened understanding is— that he only is rich, and honourable, and happy, who knows and loves that God and Saviour whom he professes to adore,

and by whose name he is called; who keeps the visible world beneath his feet, and is looking with the eye of hope to an inheritance in the invisible world, that is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

"O let my heart overflow with gratitude for the mercy and grace with which God has visited me: and let it be my unceasing desire, prayer, endeavour, and aim, to glorify God by a holy and useful life; that when my pilgrimage is ended upon earth, I may be admitted into the mansions of eternal blessedness."

If any one of you, my young readers, can express himself to this effect, he has reason indeed to rejoice: for he possesses a treasure compared with which the wealth of the material universe is absolutely nothing. Having been brought from the darkness and death of a nominal profession of the gospel, to the light and life of a scriptural acknowledgment of it, living in the right use of the means of grace, and walking with humility and circumspection in the path of righteousness, he will go from strength to strength, and his soul will brighten by the purifying influences of the Almighty Sanctifier, and be prepared in this preliminary state of existence for the enjoyment of perfection through eternity. Finally, therefore, "Beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves

in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."—"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Amen.

## THE COLLECT.

"Almighty and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto Thy divine Majesty; let Thy fatherly hand, we beseech Thee, ever be over us: let thy Holy Spirit ever be with us; and so lead us in the knowledge and obedience of Thy Word, that in the end we may obtain everlasting life; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end." Amen.

## THE PRAYER.

O Gracious God, the Giver of all good, look in mercy upon all young persons, and grant them grace to remember their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier in the days of their youth. Bless them with Thy converting power, that they may be thoughtful and serious, and may enter upon that path in which only they will find satisfaction and peace through the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Suffer them not to listen to the ignorant and

the vain, or to follow their own devices and desires: but so enlighten and renew them, that they may be children of the light, and find themselves blessed in Thee and in Thy service both here and evermore. Grant, O Lord, that those who have been led under the influence of Thy grace, to make the wise choice, may be preserved by Thy mighty power, and be enabled to persevere unto the end. Endow them with wisdom, grace, and strength, that they, in their day and generation, may be true followers of Christ, adorning the doctrine which they profess, enjoying its pure consolations, and being, through Thy blessing upon them, instruments of good to many. In the season of danger, be Thou their Refuge: in days of suffering, be Thou their Comforter: in all their difficulties, be Thou their Guide. May they walk before Thee with a perfect heart; and be Thou their shield and their exceeding great reward. Be merciful, O Lord, to all mankind: and grant that the word of mercy and grace, of salvation and life, may be effectually known among all nations. Let true piety prevail more and more among those who are called Christians. Fulfil Thy gracious promises, and hasten the period when all shall know Thee, from the least to the greatest. Be pleased, of Thine abundant goodness, to prosper the works of those who endeavour to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel in the world: let them not labour in vain, or spend their strength for nought. Thus,

**○** merciful Father, be gracious to the whole human family, according to the riches of thy love and compassion in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with Thyself and the Holy Spirit, one glorious and ever-blessed Jehovah, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## APPENDIX. ON AMUSEMENTS.

(Page 251.)

On the subject of amusements and conformity to the world, I am not acquainted with any thing which more deserves the serious consideration of my young readers than two letters in "A Memoir of Miss Mary Jane Graham, by the Rev. C. Bridges:" p. 246—264. They are too long for insertion here, but I cannot refrain from quoting a few sentences out of each of them.

From the first Letter:—"I fear lest you should think me strict and gloomy, if I tell you all I think: but I will tell you, since you desire it; and I know that God is able and willing too to give you joys so much superior to every worldly amusement, that you will wonder how you could ever think them worth a thought. I must say then, that the world and worldly amusements, appear to me quite inconsistent with the character of a real Christian; and that we never can enjoy happy converse with God till we give them up. The Christian is described in the Scriptures, as "the temple of the living God." Now, where the holy



God takes up His abode, surely that heart must be sanctified and set apart from every common use, wholly devoted to His service. But can God and the world reign in the same heart, or as it were reign by turns? Shall we admit the Lord of glory in the morning, and shut Him out in the evening, while we are going to a ball or a play? for we may be well assured, He will not go with us there. The spirit of the world, which reigns in such places, is quite opposed to His Spirit; and the friendship of the world," which is there sought, "is enmity with God." I know this would be called uncharitable; but I do not wish to be more charitable than the Bible.....

"That cannot be a proper place for a Christian, where religion is the thing that must not be named; and where even something in our hearts will tell us, that such subjects are out of place. Neither can you say—your own heart may be as well employed there as elsewhere; for the very sweetest meditation on heavenly things (if we could thus meditate in the midst of vanity) would be spoiled by the thought, that there were none who enjoyed like communion with ourselves.....

"When Christians are at a place of worldly amusement (if Christians are to be found, who will venture themselves so unguardedly into Satan's strong places,) they must either have heavenly thoughts, (and then the amusement would appear so rapid, disgusting, and uninteresting, that they

would never be able to stay it out); or else, if the amusement is an amusement to them, it fills their hearts with a crowd of vain thoughts, shuts out Christ, and lets in self and the world, and so prepares room for doubts, and fears, and much bitter repentance, before the Spirit will again shine upon a heart, which hath so wantonly despised His grace.....

“This, I confess, is our shame and misery, that we are so often entangled in vain and worldly thoughts. But surely it does but make the argument the stronger against indulging in any thing which tends to foment such thoughts..... We may fall into a worldly frame of mind in the absence of any worldly pleasures; but, because we have got a cruel enemy within, shall we go and expose ourselves to the attacks of the enemy without? Let us at least have the comfort of not having gone in quest of our misery. Temptations enough will come to us; let us not go to them. Besides, it seems to me but mocking our Father which is in heaven, to say one hour—“Lead us not into temptation”—when we have coolly made up our mind to rush into it the next.....

“If we were to ask the blessed in heaven, or the tormented in hell, what they think of such employments, would not the one smile with pity on the question, and the other exclaim with rage—“O that I had but one of those hours you are thus throwing away! You should see whether I would

let the precious moments pass in such vanities as these?"

From the second Letter :—"You must, I think, have misunderstood my meaning about worldly company and amusements. Let us but have a right motive for doing so; and I think we may safely go into any company whatever. The word of God affords us two valuable rules for all our actions, and if we could set them always before our eyes, I believe we should seldom be at a loss as to the conduct that we ought to pursue.—"Whether therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—And, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Let us always ask ourselves—Am I doing this to the glory of God? Can I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Can I boldly say—it is such an action as He would approve of? And can I look up to Him all the time I am doing it, for His sanction and blessing? If you can answer this question satisfactorily, the action, whatever it be *must* be right; and there can be no danger attending the performance of it. If, on the contrary, your mind recoils from even asking such a question, be assured there is something wrong in it, and that you would do well to give it up.....

"From the moment we take refuge at the cross of Jesus, and are "washed from our sins in His

blood,"—from that happy moment we are no longer our own, and must make it our one business to "glorify God in our body and spirit, which are God's. This seems to me the great and marked distinction between the Christian and the worldling. The one lives to himself—the other, to "Him who died for him and rose again.".....

"It cannot be however, for the glory of God, that we should show ourselves morose and unsociable. The friends and relations we have are His gifts, and therefore must not be despised or neglected. Besides, we ought to bear in mind, that the redeemed of Christ are "the salt of the earth," "a peculiar people," created anew in Christ Jesus for the very purpose of "Showing forth His praises": and how can we do this, if we shut ourselves out altogether from the world?.....

"Thus far then, I think it must be right to go into worldly company, in the discharge of relative duties.....or to avail ourselves of any providential opportunities of Christian usefulness. Let us however be careful, that our own spiritual state is not affected by it; for we can never be required to enter into any thing to the hurt of our own souls. But on the other hand, I think, if we really love Christ, this occasional mixing with worldly company will be rather a sacrifice than a pleasure to us.....

"With regard to the theatre, and amusements of

this kind, Christians must have little to do, if they can find time for them. But if they could find time, I confess I am at a loss to see what business they can find there.....You profess as a Christian to make Jesus your happiness. What can you find there to bring you into communion with Him? You profess to make His glory your aim. Can you then sit with complacency, and hear a company of your fellow creatures with immortal souls, uttering sentiments, which only tend to make them despise Christ and His ways?.....

“Do not let these words—“affected, precise, hypocrite, enthusiast, fool, madman”—and many epithets, which perhaps you will hear lavished upon the followers of the Lamb, discourage you from making His cause and people your own. I cannot but remind you—that “all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.” Not perhaps open persecution now; but ridicule, dislike, sneering, either open or secret, must be your lot, if you determine to “be not conformed to this world.” We must not think it hard, or be angry or disheartened, if these things come upon us; for our Master was “a scorn and a derision to all around Him.”.....

From the first Letter:—“I do earnestly desire, that the blessing of a single eye and undivided heart may be yours. There is no comfort in being

an undecided Christian: and Christ himself has declared that such a character is hateful to Him. Rev. iii. 15, 16."

To these extracts I will only add, that a sound and consistent Christian will not, and can not, join the world in what they call amusements. He may regard many of these amusements as free from moral evil, when simply viewed in themselves: but yet he will keep aloof from them: for he is compelled to consider many things besides the moral quality of actions. If what is lawful be not expedient, to him it becomes for that very reason unlawful. He dares not give his sanction to those things which the world are pursuing to their ruin.—He is consecrated to God, and is not his own.—He is a renewed being, and has no taste for childish and silly vanities.—He has profitable things to attend to, and cannot attend to those which are unprofitable.—Too much of the sand of life runs down without adequate improvement, and he would not increase the quantity by dissipating his mind in emptiness and folly.—In short, the Christian who identifies himself with the world in their amusements, obliges us to assert, however harsh and severe the declaration may seem, that he is unfaithful to God, to himself, and to his fellow creatures. Does he act as the spirit and laws of the Gospel require him to act? Does he study to promote the glory of God and the spiritual

good of man? Does he maintain in his breast a deep and solemn sense of his responsibility? No one will answer these questions affirmatively, until he has allowed the torpifying influence of a secular and accommodating sophistry to pervert every noble thought and holy feeling of the soul.

I cannot refrain from enlarging this appendix by a quotation from Forster's *Life of Bp. Jebb*, vol. ii. page 31: a work deeply interesting and truly valuable, well calculated to make the attentive reader of it a wiser and a better man.

"I hardly know a nicer, or more difficult subject of practical morality, than the proper estimation of what the world calls pleasure. It is a point, on which much of our views and habits must inevitably depend. Yet it is too generally predetermined, and the result is what might be naturally expected—disappointment, disgust, and ennui, amidst a rapid succession of false enjoyments, pursued even to cloying repetition. It is thus with the gay world. But even the rational and prudent decide the matter (in my poor judgment) improperly. They do not inquire, how far *must* we, but how far *may* we go? They allege the necessity of conforming to innocent usages; but they commonly carry this conformity so far, as to justify the suspicion, that they are actuated more by their own inclination, than by any other motive: besides, they seldom set about inquiring, what is innocent? And they seem to

forget, that things in themselves indifferent, may become otherwise, by excess, or abuse. There is yet another class of persons, whose sober conviction is against idle, frivolous amusements, but who occasionally engage in them, either to avoid the imputation of singularity, or from a sense of duty. When the first of these motives is the occasion of such compliance, I do not hesitate to say, that it should be watched with the utmost jealousy, and if possible overcome. We should never be afraid of a righteous singularity: we should seek our praise, not of men, but of God. We should seriously consider, how far this compromising principle may carry us; and reflect, ere it be too late, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. But, where a sense of duty keeps us more in the world than we could wish, I must own the mode of proceeding does not appear to me so clearly pointed out.....When the disrelish for such modes of social enjoyment exists, it should not be discouraged.....We were made social beings, with a natural relish for pleasure. Religion would not lead us, either to the desert, or the cloister. It would teach us to perform our parts in the active walks of life, and would infinitely enhance every feeling of real pleasure: but then, it would also teach us to walk in this world with God, and lead us to such sources of enjoyment as are pure and unadulterate; such as are suitable to thinking and immortal beings; such, in a word, as



may be pursued in another world, only in a more perfect manner, and without the clogs and hindrances of those bodies, in which our souls are now imprisoned.

“It is the character of proper recreations, that they recruit the mind and body, for a renewed application to the more serious business of life. Now, I am sure you will agree with me, that what the world calls recreation, is not of this nature. It is a drudgery of the most wearying and jading kind: it deadens the faculties, it discomposes the mind, and it injures the body. I can hardly recollect having been ever in a crowded assembly, without experiencing its prejudicial effects; without finding myself, more or less, unfitted, for pursuing my duties, that night, in prayer, and the next day, either in business, or devotion.”

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